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AN

EXCURSION TO CALIFORNIA

OVER THE

PRAIRIE, ROCKY MOUNTAINS, AND GREAT SIERRA NEVADA.

WITH A

STROLL THROUGH THE DIGGINGS AND RANCHES OF THAT COUNTRY.

BY WILLIAM KELLY, J.P.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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PREFACE.

DEDICATIONS and introductions are, I believe, strict matters of etiquette among the bon ton of the Republic of Letters; and, like many of the conventionalities of high life, produce a becoming effect when all other matters are in perfect keeping. But as I can easily imagine the feelings of a visitor pompously received in the vestibule by a powdered hall-porter, and ceremoniously ushered by a bedizened footman into a drawing-room most meagrely furnished, and wanting in many of the ordinary embellishments, I deemed it prudent to guard against such disappointments, by permitting any of the kind public who may honour me with a call, to lift the latch themselves, and step from the pavement into my humble parlour. I only adopt the preface lest I should be set down as a pert oddity, seeing that the middle and minor orders of the fraternity prefix it even to their pamphlets and pasquinades. I do not conceive it to be indispensable, nor, in fact, see exactly in what way I can use it; unless it be in assuring the gentle reader that all the occurrences and adventures I narrate did really happen and befal me—that the children of nature who crossed my path are some more interesting, some more savage than my powers of portraiture—that the varied scenery I have endeavoured to describe exists in sterner grandeur and more captivating garniture than may be imagined from my feeble colouring—and that gold rolls in the natural gutters of California "and no mistake."

At first I contemplated a series of pictorial illustrations to illuminate these pages; but having once seen an anxious crowd who were intently peering into a print-shop, entirely diverted by the bursting of a gentleman's purse on the flagway, it struck me that the plates might be overlooked in the desire to arrive at the marvellous particulars relative to the existence and mode in which gold can be picked out of the dirt in that wonderful country.

It only remains for me to say, that the light style of writing I have endeavoured to employ was suggested somewhat on the principle on which a person, devoid of good vocal powers, attempts a comic song, in expectation that perhaps the humour may countervail the lack of higher attributes; and should any captious critic exclaim, "But nobody asked you to sing, Sir," "Nobody asked you to listen," suggests itself as the reply

Of the

AUTHOR.

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AN
EXCURSION TO CALIFORNIA.

CHAPTER I.

Haul out of Dock—Gale of Wind—Anchor in the River—Description of the Company—All get on Good Terms—Weigh next Morning under Steam, Wind Unabated—Breakfast-table Scene—Sea Sickness—Cure by Vaccination—Sea ran so high, obliged to take Pilot on—His Feelings on the Subject—Barque bears down bound for Bristol, and takes him—Dreadful Squall off the Banks—Strange Meteoric Phenomenon—Description of the Passengers during the Gale—Yankee Pilot-boat and Pilot—Short Sketchy Reference to New York, being desirous to hurry on to the Prairie—Visit Boston—Superb River Steamer—Senatorial and Nigger Eloquence—Return to New York, and start for Albany by Rail—Description of that Mode of Travelling—Cross the Hudson on the Ice—Awkward Accident—Mr. Doheny in Albany—American Notions of Young Irelandism—Impostors—Laughable Occurrence.

We hauled out of dock, in that fine steam-ship the *Sarah Sands*, on the morning of the 20th of January, 1849, but there was such a hurricane blowing from the west, it was considered not only useless, but exceedingly dangerous, to put out to sea in the teeth of it. So the anchor was dropped in the river. We were not over-crowded with passengers, having just enough to constitute an agreeable party, chastened by the presence of some of the softer sex, whose charms and accomplishments dispelled the tedium and monotony of the voyage. Amongst the gentlemen we had every variety and shade of character, "both grave and gay, lively and severe;" some most amusing blades of infinite mirth, who were wont "to keep the table in a roar," and, as usual on all such occasions and congregations, a *butt*, who unconsciously contributed to the cheerfulness and good humour of the society.

None were allowed on shore, as the captain resolved on starting the moment of the slightest lull; however, it blew on, with very little abatement, all day and night, and as the passengers had nothing else to do, they set about breaking the ice of formality with so very earnest a will, that by the time the midnight summons was tolled all were on the most familiar terms possible, separating more after the manner of old friends than new-born acquaintances.

Before I had any ideas of turning out in the morning, it not being quite light, I heard the windlass bousing up the anchor, and the wind also whistling through the cordage in C sharp; sounds that brought me on deck to see what was going on, when I found the ship just under weigh, with her propeller, not a rag of canvas being set, as the wind was dead ahead, still blowing great guns; but, as the vessel's trips were pre-advertised, Captain Thompson would not wait another tide. When the breakfast-gong sounded we were abreast of the Rock light, pitching into it in most staggering style, and of those who clambered to that meal only two of the passengers remained to finish: rather an early beginning, considering, I may say, that we were still in fresh water, barely emerging from the chops of the river. But this sea-sickness is a strange, unaccountable malady—infectious, no doubt, like yawning—for no sooner did one gentleman evince a disposition to retreat, than another uttered a groan, with indistinct inquiry for the steward, which proved the signal for a most inharmonious chorus, during which all the performers made their exit, leaving the table cleared ot every one but the ship's officers and a pair of case-hardened voyageurs, who found food for mirth in the muffled moans that issued from the distant berths and state rooms, our gallant commander jocularly remarking, "Who would not sell a farm and come to sea?" As with toothache, there is no commiseration for the victims, because there is no danger; and like it, too, it entails exquisite suffering, without any "safe or certain remedy" for its cure or even alleviation being as yet discovered, though I believe the British Association have turned their attention to the matter, professing to deal with it by some process of vaccination, which, however, they have as yet kept a profound secret.

The sea ran so high outside the Light-ship we could not put the pilot on board his craft, and were, consequently, obliged to bring him on, in expectation of meeting a vessel down Channel to take him to port; but we took a last leave of the land off Cape Clear without much subsidence of the gale, or an opportunity of transhipping him; much, I should say, from all appearances, to his great gratification, being anxious to see the New World on such favourable terms as a free passage, all found out and home, and his wages accumulating during his absence. He was a fine, active, intelligent young fellow, and soon became a general favourite, and not wishing to remain idle, proffered his gratuitous services in any department; but the vessel carried so full and efficient a crew, they were most thankfully declined, reminding me of an occurrence of a somewhat similar nature that happened to a friend of mine at the *Punch* office, where some excellent original jokes were politely handed him back on the same grounds. I don't know exactly how the pilot felt, but my friend, I know, was not a little mortified.

The weather now began to moderate, but the pertinacious wind kept still confronting us until we reached a longitude about 800 miles to the westward, when we saw a large barque evidently bearing down for us, and our captain, not divining the object, hove to while she came within hail to ascertain our longitude, the weather being so hazy for some days back she could not get the sun. Everybody seemed to take an interest in the brazen colloquy but the pilot, who even retired from the deck, actuated by very opposite motives, lest his appearance might suggest the idea of sending him home, if the barque happened to be bound for a British port. However, in his absence he was not forgotten, for when, in answer to the question, "Where are you bound for?" "Bristol" came down the wind, "Pilot, make ready to go aboard!" was sung out at the top of the captain's voice. I never saw a poor fellow so chapfallen; all his efforts to affect indifference were wholly abortive, and when taking leave, he hurried through the formula with a nervous precipitancy that let out the state of his feelings.

We now got a favourable slant which carried us to the Banks of Newfoundland, when one night, as we were all engaged, some at whist, some at chess, some in conversation, and others in hammock, going along smoothly, a sudden sensation struck us like that of the unexpected stop of a vehicle travelling rapidly. We were tilted against each other; the candles reeled; the captain (whose watch it was below) rushed on deck; and before we could coin a conjecture, the ship was labouring violently, and the stern roar of command, and the clattering of feet on deck, and the hauling of ropes, and the dread bellowing of the elements, announced a tremendous squall, which took us aback, and would, no doubt, have resulted in a most dire catastrophe, only for the promptness and cool energy of the captain and his hardy crew, who had taken in studding-sails, reefed topsails, and got the vessel under easy canvas, before one of the passengers ventured up to inquire "what was the matter." Some of us imagined the ship had been struck by lightning as well, for the mast-heads and yard-arm ends were studded with large meteors—a phenomenon new to us all; but no one dared ask a question; nor would it have been answered were it asked, for all the men and officers had ample employment for their faculties besides giving explanations of the sort. After about half an hour some heavy drops of rain began falling at intervals; then suddenly, as if by touching the lever of a shower-bath, it came down in a plashing torrent, tumbling in a perfect cascade from the little quarter-deck aft the wheel. The wind soon succumbed to its potency, the crested waves were quickly beaten down into comparative quiescence, and, in less than an hour from the first shock, orders to make sail were passed, and the ship was steering her course under a clear and cloudless sky, so treacherous and fickle are the elements on the turbulent Atlantic at this season of the year.

Of course nobody was alarmed. It was a grand spectacle, worth coming the whole voyage to witness; but some melodramatic gentlemen who had descanted most eloquently on the imposing sublimity and grandeur of the war of elements, as if wholly divested of collateral consequences, were a little before simultaneously seized with a desire of examining their Prayer-books, whose gilt-edged leaves had never before been dissevered; our worthy butt, who was aroused from his pillow, demonstrating the entire absence of any emotion on his part, by sitting in the cabin amongst the affrighted ladies in a red worsted nightcap and a cutaway shirt; while Pat's characteristic exclamation, "Hould your tongue, ye haythin; if the Lord knows you're here, we're all done for," might have been most aptly applied to one gentleman, who became suddenly converted from the dark doctrines of materialism into a most sanctified professor of the Nicene Creed; but

The devil got sick, the devil a monk would be—
The devil got well, the devil a monk was he.

We had a good deal of joking, and divers and sundry bottles of mulled port before we turned in for the night, and a renewal of the fun at the breakfast-table next morning, asking for homilies from our devout brethren, and extolling the appearance of Mr. —— in his new evening costume.

All the way across the Gulf Stream and the Banks there was very variable weather, shifty winds that freshened into squalls, and cold rains that were condensed into snow, as we approached the great western continent. We almost sighted land, and a pilot-boat at the same time, in the early dawn of a clear frosty morning, which proved to be one of the Long Island bluffs; but we were all sadly disappointed on being told it was still 250 miles to Sandy Hook. The pilot soon clawed up the side, greeting the captain in the national intonation, "Captain, how d'ye you do, any how?" but looked a wee bit gritty as a cluster of innocents hovered around him to decide their various bets as "to how many buttons were wanting on his pea-jacket;" "how many guesses he would make in a given time;" "how many *calculations* he would enter into," and as to "whether he wore earrings or not." He gave us all the late New York news, and told us "we should meet considerable of field ice in shore, as it was the most darned winter they had had for years back."

I was exceedingly disappointed by the low, flat, naked appearance of the shore as we approached the land, without a natural beauty to meet the eye in any direction save the mariner's idol—a spacious and secure harbour. But this has been so frequently described, and is now so generally visited, I shall not detain my readers with a fresh portrait, the more particularly as my object is to get him on the prairie with as little delay as possible; neither shall I trouble him with any detailed opinions of the city, or my impressions regarding the striking contrasts presented in the different phases of society and commerce betwixt America and the old country. I conformed to the maxim, "When at Rome, to do as Rome does," as well as I could, being nearly as quick on my legs as my Yankee competitors at the sound of the meal gongs, but left behind, like the dunce in the schoolroom, in the system of go-a-head mastication. I smoked my cigar with rather a sickening industry, but could never persuade my palate to relish the juice of the tobacco, or arrive at anything like artistic excellence in squirting it through my teeth. I reared up my chair rather gallantly on its hind legs; the recollection of an equestrian mishap, however, restrained me from emulating the excellence of those folk who can sit under the shadow of their own toes as complacently and coolly as if under the shade of a tree. But it appeared to me strangely incompatible with the refined delicacy and high-toned feeling set down by themselves as peculiar to the States, to see a gentleman occupying an entire window, heels aloft on each side, and saluting a lady betwixt his legs; an attitude, to my mind, not peculiarly classic, and one which certainly behoves folks addicted to such a mode of salutation to have especial care about the state of their wardrobe.

I saw all the great sights, from the Croton Waterworks down, and visited most of the public institutions, which appeared to me well managed except the Post-office, which is still conducted on the old press-gang system. Strange, is it not, that, in such a city, the letter-carrying plan would not be adopted, affording as it does such useful facilities for delivery and communication? There was nothing going on at the theatres but low buffoonery, nor are those establishments worthy of so great a city. I went "special" with some ladies of my acquaintance to a promenade concert at the new Opera House in Astor-place, that I might gloat upon the boasted beauty of New York. However, I found that, like Sheridan's charity, "it is of so domestic a character it never roams abroad," though I was informed all the *élite* would attend, and retiring loveliness be induced to unveil itself there: so that I was obliged to leave the city without being permitted to gaze upon those Broadway belles whom Jonathan vaunts as the angels of humanity.

During my brief sojourn in New York, I put up at, or rather permitted myself to be huddled into, one of those huge human pens in the Broadway which there are called "houses," in contradistinction to the British synonyme of hotel, and found them even more distant and different in their system of management than in their name; no doubt according and harmonising with the spirit of "*free* and enlightened" habits and republican institutions, but strangely and uncomfortably at variance with the good old English style of conducting such establishments. As was my wont in the old country, I left my boots outside my bedroom door, where I found them in the morning, drooping as if in anguish at their total neglect, for it seems it is a matter of special contract with Sambo to have them attended to: the usual practice being to give them a daub and a rasp in the back hall after the owner is established in them for the day; clothes-brushing being accomplished in a similar way by a darkie with a pair of twigs, with which he beats a rat-tat-to all over you in time to the hum of one of his sable melodies. My bell was tardily answered by the wondering intrusion of a woolly-head, which, in reply to the demand for hot water, grinned most laughably a funny smile, and informed massa that "gemmen no shabe at home but go to barber's;" so that I was constrained either to try the process in "frigidum sine," or go down to breakfast in the stubble; before which a printed notification over the mantelpiece caught my eye, whereby I was given to understand, that "unless I deposited the key of my room with the clerk at the bar, the proprietor would not be accountable for my luggage;" a piece of information that stamped our Anglo-American cousins in my mind with the additional attribute of being "free and easy" as well as enlightened. The only other national characteristic as connected with their "houses" that may be worthy of remark, is the habit of antiprandial bibation, for instead of composing themselves comfortably to enjoy the social glass from off the naked mahogany, they crowd into the bars before the dinner-hour to "swill their drinks," "suck their juleps," and "sink their bitters."

Being most desirous to see the scenery on the Hudson, I waited a few days, in expectation that the ice would break up, and enable me to proceed to Albany by water; and those I occupied in visiting Boston, going down to Fall River by the Sound, and thence by rail, choosing this route merely to have an opportunity of travelling in that magnificent boat the *Bay States*, that plies on the station. We have no such style of river-boat on the Thames, Clyde, or Shannon; her amazing size, the gorgeous and expensive manner in which she is fitted, and the extent and ingenuity of accommodation, far and away transcends any picture of imagination, while her power and speed were perfectly in keeping with her other qualities.

Boston I admired much more than New York; it is, in truth, a fine city, fair to look upon, extensive in its commerce, polished in its society, and governed by most excellent municipal laws and regulations; there are more of the true enjoyments of domestic life there than in any other city of the Union I visited. Wealthy merchants and successful professional men all live in their private houses, and keep their regular staff of servants (or helps, as Jonathan calls them), quite in the English fashion, some even attempting livery, which, on its first appearance, created a great outcry, as an outrage against republicanism, creating badges of servitude and distinction while equality should be the invariable rule. I spent a day in listening to the debates in the houses of the Senate and Assembly; but whether it was that the subjects were barren, or the great speakers absent, I did not happen to hear any specimens of even mediocre oratory. I was, however, recompensed in the evening, by listening to the richest specimen of energetic declamation I ever heard, at a nigger prayer-meeting, during which the ebony preacher conveyed to me the delicious consolation, "dat eben de wild Irishman hab a soul to be saved."

On my return to New York, finding the Hudson still impracticable from ice, I started for Albany by rail, in a carriage that answers Dickens's description in every particular, the temperature of which was so smothering from the heat of the stove and confined air, I thought I should have an attack of apoplexy before I got to my destination, for all doors were carefully shut, and no one allowed to open a window, while at every stop I was shot from my seat against the opposite panel with a stunning concussion, Yankee drivers not caring to graduate their speed before stopping, as we do, but shutting off their steam at one stroke, come to a stand-still, with a shock as if the engine ran tilt against a battery wall, which is not only excessively uncomfortable to the passengers, but, I should say, highly injurious both to the machinery and carriages. The regulations, though, with regard to luggage, are admirable, and prevent both fraud and mistake—a numbered copper label being affixed to each trunk or parcel, of which the owner gets a duplicate, which is required to be produced at the terminus before delivery.

When I arrived at Albany, I found the station-house on the opposite side of the river to the town, so I employed a light spring waggon to take me over with my luggage; and the moment I got up, seated on my portmanteau, the driver set off at a gallop down a steep incline to the river, as I supposed to water his nags, there being no bridge in the line; but in he dashed full speed, to my great dismay, plashing the water, which was full eight inches deep on the ice. I held my breath, and affected a composure that was every now and then awkwardly tested by a straining crack, as if the whole frozen platform was about breaking up for the season, being fully persuaded my hour was come, when one of the wheels spun off, oversetting us, with a stunning crash, sending my portmanteau half scudding, half skating along like a miniature locomotive, and spreading me out in a sprawling posture, uncertain whether running or swimming was to be the next move. I was soon, however, in pursuit of the fugitive horses towards the opposite shore, leaving the driver to tow my traps into harbour.

In Albany I found the renowned Mr. Doheny, who had obtained the use of the Hall of Assembly to give to the curious public "a full and true account" of his chapter of "moving accidents by flood and field," at the small cost of fifty cents a head. I made one of a large audience, who, it was quite clear from their remarks and commentaries, were merely congregated to hear his version of the matter, and not from any interest in the prospects of his party, or solicitude about the fate of his companions. His address was well concocted—set up *rather tall*, no doubt, as Jonathan would say; the striking incidents dramatically arranged, and delivered theatrically; but his most studied efforts failed to excite a spark of enthusiasm; his hair-breadth escapes were unable to elicit a single thrill of sympathy; his choicest flowers of oratory were culled in vain. The memory of the illustrious dead interposed as a gloomy non-conductor; and while the Irish emigrant murmured his conviction that the death of O'Connell lay at the door of the Young Ireland party, the other section of the auditory muttered their distrust in the sincerity of the leaders of the revolt, sneering at the Tipperary rising as a parody on rebellion—that rising, forsooth, which was to wrest the brightest gem in the British diadem from the grasp of that powerful nation—a campaign got up without concert, arms, ammunition, money, or organisation; opened with a few dozen of the "hereditary bondsmen," ready to "strike the blow" from pure love of liberty, and the smallest taste in life of plunder;—but no, they must not infringe the sacred rights of property while they were excited to overturn a dynasty, and annihilate law and order; the revolution must be accomplished without an outrage; O'Connell would not have repeal "at the cost of a single drop ofhuman blood;" Smith O'Brien would not accept a crown if it involved the sacrifice of a bleating lamb. "Touch but one sheep," he said to his hungry heroes, "and I will withdraw from the cause"—rather an unpalatable proclamation to the boys, who were licking their lips in anticipation of the sweets and feasts they made sure of enjoying: so, when the commissariat-general came back from the village with the few loaves and no fishes, together with the change in copper, the multitude had dwindled down most magically, leaving the hero of the memorable barrack-siege to wend his way to the railway station and give himself up to the authorities.

Thus began and ended that stupendous physical force demonstration which was to place the descendant of the great Brian Bhoru on the Irish throne, an independent sovereign, and inundate the land with milk and honey. Could any sane or honest man, or set of men, expect any such result from such an effort? "Pooh, pooh! gammon! fudge! treachery!" responded Jonathan; "it is all very fine, Mr. Doheny, but rather *steep* for credit."

While Mr. Doheny and some of his genuine brethren were giving their evenings at home in various localities, several impostors sprung up to minister to the public appetite throughout the Union, it appearing to be as easy a way as any going of gathering the dollars. Men, therefore, who were some years in the States, but still retained enough of the brogue, blarney, and brass, to pass for modern refugees, started this game, which was prematurely detected in Cincinnati, where a Mr. O'Neil, placarded himself to appear on a certain evening, having accordingly presented himself to a well-filled house, in a herculean frame, uncomfortably overdressed; and, smoking with the vapour of hot rum-punch, he commenced by saying, "Ladies and gintlemen, I arise up forninst yees, to decant upon the sorrows and troubles of my poor country. (Cheers and pshaws.) I strugglid many a long day for her, and was *willin* to spill my *own* blood in her great and glorious cause, but the *vyle Sasin invaydhir* hunted me out from the bright *jm of the say*. (Loud cheers and hisses, and fluttering of whey-coloured wipers.) Och, ladies, it's aisy known there is some of the green-eyed* daughters of Ehrin amongst yees when I hear that cheer"—(Interruption, hisses, and cries of "Give back the tin!" "Go on!" "Humbug!" "Walked into!")—during which the patriot bolted, getting out at a back door. This produced a great scene of uproar, some hunting the premises, and others giving chase in the street; however, Mr. O'Neil made a most effective display, for he successfully eluded pursuit with the entire proceeds. I did not remain long enough in the States to ascertain in how far the promulgation of this attempt affected the *regulars*, but the feeling of disgust and suspicion it excited must have been, I think, sadly detrimental to their prospects.

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* *Quere*—Dark-eyed daughters of *green* Erin.

CHAPTER II.

Start for Buffalo—Scene with a Yankee Railway Clerk—Relieved from my Dilemma by some brother Exiles—Meet my Friend in Buffalo with two Recruits—Increase of the Californian Fever as I went West—Visit the Falls of Niagara—Great Fall in my preconceived Notions regarding them—Fairy Suspension-bridge—Novel Test of its Safety—Description of the Canadian Stage-coach—Glance at the Country and Towns—Detroit—Cause of its Statu Quo—Start for Niles—Rough Jaunt thence to Michigan City—Description of the Country—Lose my Way—Meet some Sulky Indians—Get right again after some Fatigue and Anxiety—Reach Chichago—Great Chain of Inland Navigation—Fine Farming Country on Fox and Rock Rivers—Melancholy Occurrence in the Vicinity of Chichago—Disagreeable Travel from that Town—Arrive at Juliett—Struggle on to Ottoway, a nice thriving Town—Its Manufactures—City of Peru; Wretched Place—The Post-office there—Get a Steamer to St. Louis—Affecting Steam-boat Disaster—St. Louis a fine City.

HAVING made an appointment to meet a brother voyager across the Atlantic on a certain day in Buffalo—one who promised to accompany me across the plains—I went to the railway-office early in the morning to ascertain the time of the starting of the train for that city. On entering the apartment, I saw before me on the counter the soles of a pair of boots, which I found were affixed to a long, thin-edged clerk, who was poised below in an arm-chair, mumbling a cigar.

"Is there an early train for Buffalo?" I asked.

"I reckon," said he.

"What do you reckon?" I rejoined, smiling, without meaning offence.

"I reckon you sha'n't travel in it, any how," said he, getting on his legs, in an angry mood.

"I require to get to Buffalo by the earliest conveyance. What's the fare?"

"No need for hurry. I'll let you wait till evening."

"I observe by this notice," pointing to one on the wall, "that a train goes at nine o'clock."

"Well, you'll not travel in it; I'll make you go by the dear cars. I see you can afford it."

"You shall not coerce me to travel otherwise than as I choose, and I warn you to refuse me a ticket at your peril," I said, throwing down my eagle. But he coolly turned away, and commenced reading a newspaper on the desk; I tried, and threatened, but could not extract another syllable from him, and never was more provoked, feeling a tingling at my fingers' ends to have a go at him; but I thought it the better course to remain, and represent his conduct to the directors. However, my anxiety to get forward was greater than my ire, for, in hurrying to ask the advice of my landlord how I should manage under the circumstances, I met in the gateway a batch of my countrymen, "coming to *dhraw* their *passagis*," as they said, to one of whom I gave the eagle to purchase an extra ticket, by which means I got on, much to the chagrin of this autocratic servant, who absolutely dared to stop my luggage; but this I summarily stopped by an *argumentum ad hominem.*

A pretty specimen this of the laws and customs of the free republic, where a stranger's comfort and convenience is at the mercy of an impudent railway clerk, who can inflict the penance of extra cost and delay if you cannot comprehend in a moment his delectable slang!

It is needless to take up time and space in describing towns and cities, of which full-length portraits are contained in every handbook; while the country being enveloped in a shroud of snow, debarred me from seeing any variety of feature worthy of notice. I found my friend in Buffalo, with two Californian recruits, Canadian gentlemen, who were most acceptable companions, being men of education and ability. Although the Californian fever prevailed along the eastern seaboard, I found, the further I went west, the more intensely it became ramified; the scepticism, too, that accompanied it along the coast, vanished as I approached the banks of the Mississippi. There were several parties in process of formation in Buffalo, who had prospectuses published stating the nature of their engagements, and setting forth their rules and bye-laws; but they were not exactly the style of men we chose to herd with for four months, so we determined to hold on until we got to St. Louis, unless we happened to meet more congenial spirits.

As the lake navigation to Detroit was closed, without a hope of its opening for a month, we booked ourselves by a stage that travels from Niagara over Canada—a long and tedious route, but the only one practicable at the time—getting to the Falls by rail, where we stopped a few hours to survey the celebrated cataract; but, like most other American marvels, it falls, in my mind, far short of its wondrous reputation. They are great falls, no doubt, measuring the body of water that tumbles over them; but they are neither nearly so high, nor so beautiful, as many of those in Switzerland, Ireland, and Scotland, that I had already seen. I saw them, too, in their most attractive guise, corniced round with huge grotesque icicles, the rocks fantastically fretted in crisp snowy drapery, and sheets of disengaged ice plunging momentarily into the seething abyss below; and though I was vastly pleased, I was not exactly stupified with amazement, much to the annoyance of some Yankee gentlemen who were viewing them at the same time, vowing "they whipped all creation in the water *land*-scape line." They present a grand spectacle, I admit; but are not, to use Jonathan's own phrase, "quite all they are cracked up for."

My admiration was much more largely drawn upon by the exquisitely delicate suspension-bridge that spans the rushing waters of the river, which hangs at a distance in mid-air, like the slender threads of the silk-worm, discernible only by the frequent weavings of its tiny wires; and even when approached and surveyed closely, looks rather as if it was intended as a thoroughfare for fairies than a human highway. Our luggage was trundled over in a barrow, but we were not permitted to follow until it reached the other side, which caused me to ask the toll-keeper did he not then consider it safe. "Oh, yes," he said, "perfectly safe; a *woman* crossed it the day before yesterday; but I must obey my orders." To this conclusive reasoning I made no reply, but waited until the porter reached the opposite side, where I wished I was myself, without the gratification of viewing the foaming river through the wires.

There was a clumsy stage vehicle waiting on the Canadian side, holding nine inside passengers, in rather uncomfortable proximity with canvas flaps hanging down in lieu of windows, which neither answered to exclude the air or admit the light. I never travelled in so disagreeable a conveyance; and, to make the matter worse, we were doomed to a long tenure of it, as from the state of the roads, the winter now breaking up, we scarcely averaged a mile an hour, the wheels sinking the whole time up to the naves. The trip to Detroit occupied us nine days and nights, and I calculate that we walked at least half the distance, being frequently called out in the middle of a cold raw night to trudge up to our knees through miry roads, or have the vehicle stuck in the same spot all the time.

We passed through some magnificent country around St. Margaret's, Hamilton, and London, where the farm and farmsteads are fully equal to any in the old country, and the land rated at as high a price. Detroit is a beautifully situated city, on the strait between Lakes Erie and St. Clair, but its progress is retarded by the dogged obstinacy of the old French inhabitants, who own most of the property on which it stands, and, like the dog in the manger, will neither sell or grant such leases as would induce people of enterprise to invest their capital, nor will they improve it themselves; nevertheless it is a fine and stirring city, presenting a very obvious contrast to the Canadian city of Windsor, on the opposite side of the strait.

I got from Detroit to Niles by railway; but thence to Chichago I was obliged, with seven others, to travel in an open waggon. There are some comfortable and improving farmers about Niles, and along the northern part of Indiana to Michigan city. But after leaving this place, which is a dull, stupid village, built amongst sand-hills, formed by the drift from the lake shores near which it stands, the road lies through a large forest; and as our progress was necessarily slow, there being no regular road, I took my rifle and started for a saunter, appointing to catch up at a distant landmark, and diverged off the path, in expectation of finding some deer, with which I heard the forest was well stocked; but after some hours' laborious beating about, without meeting game of any description, feathered or four-footed, I headed, as I thought, to the appointed place. When I arrived there, I could not find any indication of travel, and being very much tired, sat down for an hour's rest; but as evening approached without any sign of the waggon, I became rather uneasy, firing my rifle at intervals; and no shot being returned, I struck off in a westerly direction, in hopes of crossing the trail, fagging over five miles without discovering a trace, until I came suddenly upon some Indians, who were in a swamp, killing musk rats, the skin of which is of some little value. I would have retired, but seeing they observed me, I went towards them, it being bad policy to betray apprehension, as it often leads to aggression where otherwise you might have escaped unmolested. I made signs to them that I had lost my way, but they were sulky and uncommunicative, and either did not understand my gestures, or would give themselves no trouble to inform me; so I was obliged to rely on my own resources, still pursuing a westerly course, resignedly considering how I should spend the night in the woods, when I heard the tinkling of some bells in the distance, and following the welcome sounds, found a large clearance and a little hut, in which there was a lone nigger woman, who came nearly a mile with me to point out a path that would lead me to where the few travellers who came that way were in the habit of stopping. It was three miles further, and though there was very good moonlight, I had considerable difficulty in picking out the trail, which was a very faint one. I, however, proceeded, slowly and cautiously, and when very nearly tired down, perceived a glimmering light, which pointed out the solitary hostelry, where my companions had put up; they were at supper, and in deliberation as to what course they should pursue regarding me as I made my appearance, greatly knocked up, and with a greater desire for rest than refreshment; but a savoury plate of stewed beef and a bowl of good coffee elicited a capacity I did not imagine I possessed.

We reached Chichago next day, and found it in a state of partial destruction, from an unprecedented flood, that carried away stores, wharves, and piers, bursting with such violence in the inner harbour, that ships and steamers were stove in by the force with which they were jammed against each other. Chichago is one of the most rising towns in the Union; and now that the canal connecting Lake Michigan with the Illinois and Mississippi rivers is open, must grow apace, as ships can, for the future, sail from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the Gulf of Mexico by means of inland navigation, the Illinois being a fine navigable river, flowing into the Mississippi about fifty miles above St. Louis. Some of the best farming country in the States is in this region, particularly along the course of Fox and Rock rivers, the produce of which comes to market in Chichago; while large tracts of prairie around the city are under cultivation, producing the finest description of grain and vegetables. It is becoming a very favourite neighbourhood for emigrants to settle in; and were I to take up my abode in the country, I should fix my quarters hereabouts, with land of superior quality, great facilities for transporting produce, and good markets.

In walking over the common in the afternoon I witnessed a very melancholy occurrence, in the wounding of a lady of great respectability, who was leading her child by the hand for an evening stroll, when she was shot quite close to me by a fellow who, with a number of others, was indulging in rifle practice. He at first made an attempt to run for the suburbs, but afterwards waited until he was arrested. When I left next day, I heard the poor sufferer's condition was nearly hopeless; so that people in that country, inclined for an after-dinner saunter, had better arrange their affairs in the first instance, for I understand accidents of this description are of very frequent occurrence.

The next day's stage lay over a low prairie, which presented a surface of pools, lakes, and flashes, from the late thaws, that made it more a water than a land journey, and, as the fellow said who agreed to work his passage by driving canal horses, "I might as well walk as be after trudging in that manner;" being compelled to proceed most of the way on foot, as the horses were unable to pull the waggon through the miry ground, while, to add to our grievances, we were some miles from our quarters at sundown, and, in endeavouring to pick out the most favourable wading places in the gloaming, were frequently aswim in crossing the sloughs. However, we reached an old Dutch settler's in safety, where we billeted ourselves for the night.

The following day we crossed a rough but interesting country parallel with the canal, and got to Juliett, a new town, in a tremendous thunderstorm. It was our intention to perform the remainder of the journey to Peru by water in a small skiff; but the river was so swollen, we were recommended to put up with the inconveniences of an infamous road, and a worse conveyance, rather than risk the current. A pair of horses was all we could muster, one of which was as lame as a tree, making a team barely equal to the luggage, for it was only on firm level ground, and that in their turn, that the passengers got a lift; nor could we procure any change at the village where we spent the night, so that there was no alternative but take the same conveyance on to Ottaway, a nice thriving young town, seated at the confluence of the Fox and Illinois rivers, and remarkable for the quantities of window-sashes made there; not in large establishments, but by a number of individual tradesmen, who send immense supplies to St. Louis. On inquiring the reason why sashwork was almost the exclusive employment, I had none assigned beyond this: that one carpenter, a few years back, began the trade, and as he succeeded, others commenced the same line of business, others still constantly following, until it acquired the pre-eminence it now enjoys in that branch of trade. The canal enters the river a little below the town, and a mile further down is the city of Peru, one of the filthiest and most abominable holes I ever set my foot in. It is one of those places got up by speculation; and I understand such was the rage at one time to become possessed of lots there, that they rose higher than in the oldest and most flourishing cities in the States. But the bubble burst, and Peru, which was to have been worthy of its ambitious name, is now little better than an aggregation of noisome styes. It, however, boasts a post-office amongst its public institutions, but the postmaster is saved the rent of a house by carrying the mail in his hat, which he delivers as he chances to meet the parties in the street.

We here got the steamer to St. Louis, which was crowded with a most motley, piebald lot of passengers, most of whom were bound for California, some by the land route, and others by New Orleans and Chagres. The Illinois is a splendid river, free, for the most part, from any obstructions to navigation, such as shoals, snags, or sawyers, with a swift current, and literally strewed with water-fowl, mostly of the duck tribe. It is generally densely timbered along the banks, so that there are no fine views, and even in the few open places the scenery is not beyond an ordinary character. Its waters were prodigiously swollen at that time; and at several of the little settlements at which we stopped to take in cargo, we came alongside the stores, and received the goods from the second, and, in some instances, from the third story. Our progress was very much retarded by those numerous stoppages, for we did not pass a solitary shanty that a shore bell (the signal of goods for shipment) was not rung, much to the annoyance of the passengers. Coal was our fuel all the way, supplied at the different stations, which abounds, and of a fine quality, along the course of the Illinois, in a measure accounting for the continuance of the dense forests, as it is used in preference to wood.

Towards the close of the second day, as the shades of evening were beginning to settle down, we observed a halo above the horizon, in the direction where the sun had sank; but imagining it emanated from that luminary, we thought nothing of it, till it became quite apparent, as we advanced, that it was a lurid flame, arising from some great burning pile; a little further, and the confused hum of voices came along the still calm air—settlers enjoying some merrymaking round their large log fires. But no; those are not the sounds of glee and mirth. Hark! there is anxiety in that shout—there, that is surely the scream of female terror. Yes; there is no mistaking it now; those are the hurried words of command—a catastrophe has taken place; and as we rounded a bend of the river we saw the funeral pile of a steamer, the flames roaring and crackling, numbers of human beings clustered in the arms and branches of the trees that stood in the flood where she was driven when the fire was discovered, and many standing in the water up to their armpits, holding up females and children. It was a terrific sight to contemplate, for the sad wails impressed us with the melancholy conviction that human life was involved in the accident. We durst not approach too closely, but sent our boats off to relieve the sufferers, taking on board the ladies and children first; and long before the last man was on our deck, there was not a fragment of the ill-fated boat to be seen: the dark waters had closed over the last vestige of her hull. Providence, however, benignly spared all souls.

She was a superb new boat, owned by the captain, a young man whose all was embarked in her, who was just married to a lovely girl, and was spending the first phase of the honeymoon on board the virgin craft, that had too, on the same morning, espoused her destined element; and sailed proudly and gaily away from

St. Louis, with colours flying, bearing on her bosom the bridal party—sweet concurrence, arranged by the bridegroom in trustful lovingness of his youthful partner. They launched out together on the stream of life in the vessel of their hopes, and in the fair prospect that shone before them anticipated no reverse; it would have been a slighting of kind fortune to doubt her continuous sincerity by insuring the boat; but the same sun that beamed upon their first essay, sunk sadly upon their fortunes. The poor captain bore his losses bravely; and if a shade of melancholy passed his brow, it was more in consequence of his wife's dejection than at the untimely wreck of his entire property. The great accession of passengers left us in a very crowded state; so much so, that we had four sets of company at each meal; but we did not suffer the inconvenience long, as we reached St. Louis the evening of the next day.

St. Louis is a great commercial city, and is already styled the Queen of the West, from the rapidity of its growth, and the steady increase of its commerce. The streets in the older parts of the town are, unfortunately, rather narrow for the throng of business; but all the more modern ones are laid out with great regularity and sufficient width for any thoroughfare, built in a substantial and ornate style of architecture. The quays, however—the great arena of trade—are altogether too circumscribed for the requirements of the great commerce of the place, and present a scene of everlasting and indescribable confusion, from the jostling and jamming of carts and waggons, and the shouting and altercation of the nigger teamsters; nor from the high value of property in the neighbourhood, and the quality of the stores and buildings along it, does there appear to be much prospect of amendment in that respect.

CHAPTER III.

Pleasing Aspect of Slavery at St. Louis—Meet an Old Schoolfellow resident there—Takes me to see the Lions—Get our full Complement of Recruits—Decline Equipping until we reached the Frontier Towns—Town filled with Californian Placards—Streets lined with Californian Implements—Newspapers crammed with Californian Advertisements—Hold a Meeting of the Company, at which I was elected Captain—All Novices in Desert-Travelling—Adopt a Costume—Give a Dinner to our Friends—Attend a Nigger Ball—Description of the Assembly—Get Turned Out—The Cause Explained—Start for Independence—Steam-boat Company—Their Tastes and Habits—The Missouri River and its Settlers—Wild Fowl; Wild Turkey—Rifle Practice—Jefferson City, the Capital of Missouri—Steam-boat Race; Nervous Affair—Study of American Customs—Left behind at Boonville—Exciting Race—Independence—Get our Outfit—Purchase Mules, Horses, and Waggons—Difficulty of Managing our Mules—Nigger Mode of dealing with them—Start for the Line—Indian Tribes; their Decline—Ravenous Pigs—Arrangement of Duties.

At St. Louis I got, for the first time, fairly into the region of slavery, the black, muggy face and woolly head of the nigger meeting me at every turn. Every menial duty, and nearly all labour, is performed by this race, who, slaves though they be, seem a jolly, contented set, generally on the broad grin, poking fun and jokes at one another; rendering it the next thing to impossible to pity their deplorable state, all one can do, while they themselves appear so provokingly happy. But I was obliged to soothe my conscience by admitting to it, that notwithstanding the perverse contentment of those unfortunate beings, slavery in the abstract and in theory is a sinful, hideous, and abominable institution. I met here an old friend and schoolfellow, F. W——, who is established in the provision trade, which is the leading business of the place. It is quite a sight, visiting some of the stupendous curing establishments, to observe the gigantic scale on which they are carried on, and the new and curious contrivances employed in the process by which a pig is killed, scalded, cut up, and reposing in salt, in the twinkling of an eye, so that the echoes of his last grunt have not well died away ere he is transmuted into bacon. All strangers visit those places as they do Barclay and Perkins's of London, or Guinness of Dublin.

In coming down the Illinois I made acquaintance of eleven young men, lately from England, bound for California; persons of respectability and education, with means, too, to fit out according to the standard my other friends and I had chalked out. We seemed mutually attracted to each other, and the moment the idea of union was broached they immediately acquiesced, making our muster fifteen; while an accession of ten more at the City Hotel of the same class completed the number we desired—twenty-five, all told; eight of whom were Yankees, two Scotchmen, and two Irishmen, leaving the old country represented in our party in the ratio of two to one.

We first intended to fit out in St. Louis, lest the traders in the two towns on the extreme frontier might take advantage of our having no other resource, and run up prices; but my friend, Mr. W——, recommended us, at all events, to postpone the purchase of mules and waggons until we reached Independence, as it has been for years back the great starting point for the Santa Fe and Chihuaha traders, where trained and seasoned animals were more readily procured, and waggons suitable to the plains, built by men who understood, from long experience, all the requirements of such vehicles.

As I before remarked, the further west I proceeded, the more intense became the Californian fever. California met you here at every turn, every corner, every dead wall; every post and pillar was labelled with Californian placards. The shops seemed to contain nothing but articles for California. As you proceeded along the flagways, you required great circumspection, lest your coat-tails should be whisked into some of the multifarious Californian gold-washing machines, kept in perpetual motion by little ebony cherubs, singing

> Oh, Susannah, don't you cry for me,
> I'm gone to California with my wash-bowl on my knee.

Californian advertisements, and extracts from Californian letters, filled all the newspapers; and "are you for California?" was the constantly recurring question of the day; so that one would almost imagine the whole city was on wheels bound for that attractive region.

Acting on Mr. W——'s advice, we only purchased our rifles, pistols, broadswords, and bowie-knives there; but, as our company was complete, it was resolved to hold a meeting to discuss the bill of fare, the rules of travel, and elect a captain to see them enforced, the ballot for which post of honour terminated in my favour by an unanimous vote; and, though I felt gratified by the compliment, I did not exactly relish the responsibility, never having had any experience in desert-travelling, nor should I have accepted it, only that all were equally inexperienced, and some one should undertake the duty. It was agreed to wear, in as far as we could, a uniform costume—green caps and jackets, with white trousers; and in selecting all our other appointments, we endeavoured to have them as similar as possible.

We gave a dinner the evening before we left to our friends and acquaintances at St. Louis, at which we had a great deal of Californian spouting and singing; but I contrived to get away early with Mr. W——, to attend a nigger ball, in honour of some African festival, which I was given to understand would be a rare treat to a foreigner, unused to the imitative gentility of the sable race. It is a matter of some difficulty for whites to get admission to those reunions, as jokes and tricks have often resulted from their presence; besides which, the niggers conceive they only desire to attend in order to ridicule them. However, Mr. W—— got tickets through some of his own darkies, and we were admitted, but not without a rigid scrutiny. Although it was full nine o'clock when we entered, there was no one in the ball-room but the stewards, strutting about in all the pride of lofty shirt-collars and decorations, for this assembly of "*Allblacks*" had their correct notions about the fashionable propriety of late hours as well as the titled frequenters of Willis's Great Rooms. Some of the earliest setting-downs took place shortly after our arrival, the ladies, in low dresses, tightened round the waist with an indentation more like a girth than a pair of stays; all wearing little kerchiefs of bright colours round their necks, with a sort of semi-turban on the head, of a regular rainbow complexion; and drops, of such dimensions and gravity as elongated the ears into the shape of jargonelle pears. Men and women wore white gloves, and their faces shone with a polish as if they washed in copal varnish for the occasion. There was also a deal of perfumery in requisition, but eau de Cologne and lavender-water soon became too strongly diluted with other essences to retain their virtues, bringing to mind Dean Swift's couplet—

> Not all Arabia's spices would sufficient be;
> Thou smell'st not of their sweets—they stink of thee."

The orchestra was at the end of the room, and in front of it a refreshment counter, where mint juleps and oyster patties were served out. There were several old people amongst the company, all of whom had either a pair of bones, or a tin rattle in the head of their canes, to beat time, as they could not dance. Presently the fiddles and banjos struck up, when the floor was quickly tenanted; a movement very soon followed by a hurricane of sneezing, during which I also caught the infection; but the noise of those nasal convulsions was partly drowned as the "fun became fast and furious," raising up a dust which, seizing everybody by the nose, set musicians, dancers, and spectators into such a paroxysm of sneezing as brought all simultaneously to a full stop. The ladies seemed ill at ease, too, between the shoulders, and many a fair heel was spasmodically uplifted to allay the irritation on the other leg, while others kept nipping their dresses, as if to annihilate some foreign intruder in the lining; in fact, dancing and fiddling now became completely merged in sneezing and scratching. I felt there was foul play somewhere, for my shins itched most irresistibly; but very soon found that the suspicion alit upon Mr. W—— and myself, as the stewards, in a body, came up to us, sneezing, and gave us to understand, sneezing, the sooner we retired the better for our comforts and safety, as there was a great and general inclination to inflict condign punishment on us for what we had done. There was no use in attempting an explanation in the tempest of sneezing, so we accordingly withdrew, sneezing, and left this polished society to sneeze and scratch themselves to their hearts' content. We, however, ascertained next morning that some mischievous wags managed to get into the ball-room during the day, and dredged the floor with hellebore and cayenne, which, sent floating in the atmosphere by the beating of the dancers, produced the annoying results which led to our ejection.

The journey from St. Louis to Independence is accomplished by water, so we secured our berths on board the *Sacramento*, and though I was now tolerably well seasoned to the vexations of travel, there was such a mob on board the boat, I would rather have walked, could I so have managed it, than be stowed away with them for a week. We had every variety of character—political and otherwise—Whig, Democrat, Locofoco, Loafer, Owner, and Abolitionist, in continual disputation, wrangling about politics, contending about the merits of their respective champions, and only coinciding in their mode of manufacturing tobacco-juice. And I must say, all I before saw in that way was merely a type of the custom as compared with its inveteracy there; for they eat into a cake of tobacco as an English ploughman would into a cut of cheese, and this engendered such copious secretions of saliva, that the bilious cascades streamed out of the scuttle-holes, staining the painted sides of the vessel like yellow-ochre, and smearing the deck with disgusting blotches, which rendered footing perfectly insecure. The distinguishing feature of the habit being so abominably filthy, a gentleman on board suggested guano as a substitute, being "quite as cheap and twice as nasty."

We sailed twenty-five miles up the Mississippi, where its clear waters receive the turbid Missouri, up whose stream our course lay for near 400 miles. At the point of junction it is much the larger river of the two, though it yields up its name to its more slender partner. We lay by every night, for the snags and sawyers on it are so numerous and formidable, no pilot would undertake to run after sunset, unless with a full moon and a cloudless sky. The country along its banks is, for the most part, thickly wooded and level, the soil generally rich and fertile; but it is excessively unhealthy, and the inhabitants or settlers are a gaunt race, with drab complexions, the exact reflection of the muddy current. It is not from the water, I believe, they imbibe their maladies, for when it is allowed to settle, although it loses its consistence it retains its colour, and makes a well-tasted wholesome beverage. There are numbers of dry bars throughout the entire river, which keep shifting, and thus changing the channel perpetually. They are covered with wild geese exclusively, for during the entire sail we never saw any other description of water-fowl, the ducks seeming to have their dominion on the limpid Illinois, and the geese their kingdom on the Missouri. There were plenty of wild turkeys in the woods; but from a specimen that one of our passengers shot, they are not here a very desirable bird, for it was all shanks and wings; the steward, to whom it was given to prepare for table, asserting "the tarnation critter would soak more butter in basting than it was worth." I suspect, however, it must have been raised in the regions of malaria, for there is no finer or more delicate fowl when you get it in condition, as I afterwards did when crossing the plains. We frequently saw deer swimming across, both ahead and astern of us, which afforded the Californians fine opportunities for rifle practice; indeed, throughout each day it was an unintermitting fusilade, except at meal hours; and from the reckless manner in which some directed their discharges, and the awkward way in which others handled their guns, it was next to a miracle that some serious accident did not take place, either on board or on shore.

We passed Mountpleasant as we ascended the stream, and Jefferson City, the capital of the State of Missouri, where we waited sufficiently long to explore the place. It is a small town, without much trade, or anything deserving of notice but the Senate House, which is more remarkable for its size and elevated position than its architectural taste. While lying here we were overhauled by another boat belonging to an opposition company, and as soon as she was discovered the bell was rung violently for "all on board," and the fires heaped with fuel for a race. I am a great advocate for speedy travelling, and like the sensation quite as much as Dr. Johnston, provided I am seated in a "post-chaise;" but in this instance there was a large drawback on my pleasure, for instead of sitting behind a docile team, I was cheek-by-jowl with a high-pressure engine, in danger of being cooked to a bubble in hot steam, or blown as food for fishes into the cold river. I looked anxiously to the shore, and felt a longing desire for a stroll in the woods, which became more intense as the black smoke gurgled out of the funnel; for though I did not study the science of "Fumography" in Paul Dogherty's school, by which "a man can tell by the smoke from the kitchen chimney what his neighbour has for dinner," I was sufficiently familiar with the murky element to know there was an explosion in our pot if we persevered much longer. We have it on the authority of our ancestors, that a "hen on a hot griddle betrays a world of uneasiness," and I thought of the troubles of the poor bird as I fidgeted about the deck, with the hot resin sticking to my shoe soles; while, to aggravate the circumstances of our danger—though it was very evident we had no chance with our opponent—the order was still to heave on more coal and tar staves; and as she drew quite close upon our starboard quarter, the word was passed to "try a side of fat bacon;" but the question of speed being perfectly decided, the passengers unanimously remonstrated, and compelled the captain to postpone "the bustin" to some more favourable opportunity.

From the number we had on board, and the consequent consumption of food, our stock of provisions began to run low, so that at the second and third tables there was neither milk nor butter, or a sufficiency of fresh meat—a state of things which begat a more active competition than usual to secure places at the first table, making it a source of great danger to enter into the strife when the bell rang. I was generally content to await the second class; and as I stood behind the more fortunate passengers, waiting for a vacant chair, had an excellent opportunity of studying the Western mode of dinner tactics; when it struck me forcibly that the only way of ensuring expedition is to learn to perform all the evolutions with the same implement—a practice in which they all seemed adepts—first cutting the morsel with their knives, then feathering them, sailor fashion, tucking in with them meat and vegetables at one and the same time, slipping it from the mouth into the "*sarse*," or salt-cellar, without losing a moment—a thing altogether impossible were they to wait to use the spoon. Nor do they pause for a change of plates, as if the several edibles and esculants went into different abdominal compartments; but with strong common sense and true republican abhorrence of distinctions, make one answer all the purposes, placing their fish, flesh, and fowl, molasses and melted butter, vegetables and bread, in proximate rotation; and instead of the slovenly fashion of leaving stagnant juices to settle and congeal, they them wipe all dry with a sponge of soft bread, which serves as the tombstone of the meal, and retire from the table, without waiting to pick their teeth with their tobacco knives—an operation in which they appear to take great delight, spending a pleasurable post prandial half hour in digging out the cavities and licking the blades.

We stopped at Boonville, a very nice little town, to get a fresh supply of provisions, when a lot of us took advantage of the period to look at a drove of mules a dealer said he had in a paddock beyond the town. On examining them we found they were all of the American breed, which did not suit, and returned leisurely towards the quay; but on getting to the hill overlooking the river we saw the steamer under weigh, and a considerable distance up stream. Our first idea was to run and engage a boat to follow; but then the absurdity of giving chase to a steamer with oars, soon again flashed upon us; so with one impulse we started at a quick run along the hill-side, entering a thick forest beyond the town, where we were vexatiously retarded by brush and logs. About three miles up, the current of the river was fortunately concentrated into a channel betwixt an island and the shore, and ran with such exceeding velocity that the steamer could do little more than stem it; so we soon began to close upon her, getting within hail before she got through the gut; but there was a long tail to our party, some being so far behind, the captain was with difficulty prevailed on to wait for them. We reached Lexington the same night, which is a stirring, thriving town, very prettily situated, with a fine and well settled country behind it; and next evening got to the point of debarkation, about three miles from the town of Independence, where a scene of bustle and confusion ensued it would not be easy to describe, as the time of staying was limited, the boat being bound to St. Joseph, sixty miles higher up. Every man acted as his own porter, and, in the numerous collisions on the gangway, several articles dropped over. One encounter took place in which the four belligerents stumbled into the river, which, though not deep enough to endanger their lives, had the effect of cooling their irascibility.

Independence we found precisely what Mr. W—— described it—abundantly supplied with every article requisite for our outfit. We placed ourselves entirely in the hands of Mr. White, who is extensively engaged in the Mexican trade, with large branch establishments at Santa Fe and Chihanha, and, having crossed the plains several times to those places, was, from his experience, enabled to give us many useful suggestions. We secured from his waggon-builder five of his best light waggons, several of which he had made in anticipation of the demand, and, on his recommendation, went out to the residence of Colonel Ralston to purchase our mules, who had several hundred, principally of Mexican breed, out of which we made a selection of forty-five, being six for each team, and three spare ones to each waggon, as relief animals, in case of fagging or accident. We also purchased three riding-horses for each mess, making fifteen, and a bell-mare to keep the mules together, as, strange to say, they form a peculiar attachment to a horse, and still greater to a mare; the bell-mare, which they follow through fire or water, superseding the necessity of herding or driving them; while, in cases of fright, they crowd and crouch round her like a flock of sheep, as if they expected protection; betraying, too, at times, a most amusing jealousy in endeavouring to get next her as they travel along, nipping, biting, and kicking each other, while the object of their affection treats them with the greatest disdain, spurning their advances with her heels—which, however, never provokes retaliation, though they are quick enough to resent an injury amongst themselves.

Our animals in all amounted to sixty-one, and we appointed Easter Monday as the day to come and take them away; meantime we were very industrious in getting our other supplies. The town of Independence is nicely placed on elevated ground, gently declining all around, with finely-timbered hills swelling up beyond the slopes, which now presented a most animated appearance, their sides in every direction being studded with the tents of intending emigrants, with their animals picketed about, going to and fro all day, engaged in making preparations for their arduous journey; in the evening especially, when the several camp-fires were lighted up to cook the evening meal, the dusky forms flitting across the light, which illuminated, with its lurid glare, the grand natural arcades formed by the stately timber, it was a sight strange yet pleasing to look upon. Soft music, too, with its mellowing charm, came gently floating on the evening zephyr across the vale, adding its sweet interest to the scene. They were divided into several companies, some intending to travel with oxen, some with mules, all canvassing for adherents, in order to have as large trains as possible to be able to meet any Indian attack. Most of the companies numbered thirty messes, or waggons, and several as high as fifty, while our little band only counted five; but we were well equipped, each man carrying in his belt a revolver, a sword, and bowie-knife; the mounted men having besides a pair of holster-pistols and a rifle slung from the horn of their saddles, over and above which there were several double and single-shot guns and rifles suspended in the waggons, in loops, near the fore-part, where they would be easily accessible in case of attack.

Few of the others intended starting before the 1st of May, as the spring was unusually backward, and they apprehended a scarcity of feed; but on Easter

Monday we went out to Colonel Ralston's for the animals, having engaged an experienced teamster and two nigger assistants to help us. We had not much trouble in catching them, after driving them into an angle of the enclosure, where we got hold of the bell-mare, who was led quietly into town with her train of mules at her heels, leaving us the saddle-horses to ride. When we got in we drove them into a large railed yard, which we hired for the purpose of getting them into harness, and at this point our real troubles commenced—I may add, too, our pains and penalties, for there was not one out of the entire who escaped unscathed from the task. They were a most refractory lot to deal with; not an animal of the batch letting on the gear without a fierce struggle, frequently mixed up with amusement, for it was most laughable to see a regular set-to betwixt a nigger and one of the mules, the mule rearing and lifting up Sambo, hanging on by the ear, into the air; who, the moment he reached the ground, ran at the delinquent with his head like a ram, butting him in the ribs, sometimes with such force as to completely stun "de dam son ob a jackass," and in bad cases seizing the lug in his teeth, and holding on like grim death, while a collar was fitting or a britching being adjusted.

It was tolerably late in the day before our five teams were hitched up and ready for the road; but as we got into line, a finely-mounted and accoutred little troop, a man on each side of every waggon, in the plain but handsome uniform, we looked rather gay, and had a respectable throng about us, who raised a valedictory and admiring cheer as we moved off, only twenty-five strong, nearly three weeks in advance of the remainder of the emigration. We only travelled eight miles, taking up our quarters near Colonel Russell's rendezvous, who was to lead a very large company across the plains that season. It was a fine night, our good stars seeming to shine auspiciously upon us. Discipline was now commenced, and guard relieved every two hours. Next morning we had another series of battles with the mules, but we got them in, and in motion, without any breakage or accident, and proceeded over twelve miles of magnificent country to the Line—I don't mean the great globular girdle from which Mrs. Ramsbottom would give her eyes to get a few yards for a *Unick* bell-pull, but the line of demarcation between the pale-face and the Indian—the extreme margin of civilisation—the boundary agreed upon in solemn treaty between the government of the United States and the convocation of desert chieftains as the last limit of encroachment—the point at which the plough of the hardy settler was to stop—where the hunting-ground of the red-skin commenced, stretching away into illimitable space.

The tribes close by the border are the Shawnees and Delawares, immediately beyond whom, on the Kansas, are the Pottawattomees: all of whom are partly christianised, and speak and understand a little English; but neither precept, example, or encouragement, can convert them into useful or industrious habits; for though game has become very scarce on the frontier prairies, they prefer depending for sustenance on its precarious supply to raising food from the soil. They receive a pension from the States for the ground they have yielded up west of the Mississippi, which is paid them quarterly, through the medium of States' officers, called Indian agents, whose duty it is also to prevent any whites from settling beyond the boundary, unless those who by intermarriage get tracts in right of their squaws. Smiths and carpenters, paid by the States, are settled at convenient points as far as the Kansas River, but not beyond, to make ploughs, farming implements, doors, sashes, and house furniture, or whatever else the Indians may require; but their labour is not much sought for in those matters; they are principally employed in doctoring old guns and powder-flasks, and repairing bridles, spurs, and stirrup-irons, as those neighbouring tribes pride themselves on the appearance and efficiency of such-like articles. They are kind and harmless, robust and good-looking, but excessively addicted to drink when within their reach. We had them constantly in our camp, and spirits was the only thing they appeared to desiderate.

We had here a fine field for training our mules, as we could start off in any direction without fear of an overset from gripe or gully; so every morning, the first thing after breakfast, we all mustered to harness them, and give them a good drive, lest idleness should cause them to relapse into their original mulishness. We waited here five days, and hired an ox-waggon, laden with corn for feed, to accompany us as far as the Kansas, as the grass was so short it would not afford sufficient pasture. During our short stay we almost fed the stock exclusively on corn, which we got on very moderate terms from the neighbouring farmers. Mules are exceedingly fond of it, particularly in the cob, and shell it off most cunningly, without losing a grain. There is a tavern built at the point of departure called the "House of Refuge," one half of it being beyond the Line, and consequently beyond the pale of United States' laws; so that, once within that wing, you are beyond the grasp of the sheriff. It is, I understand, generally well tenanted; and at the time of my visit had not a corner left for a costive debtor.

We were confoundedly annoyed, morning and evening, by hordes of half-wild hogs, which the settlers suffer to propagate *ad infinitum* in the woods: a most unsightly animal, long and stilty, like the old Milesian pig, but with a mane and tusks peculiarly wild-boarish. They are bold as brass, and fierce as tigers when provoked, displaying considerable sagacity as well; for although they were not to be seen during the day, they came punctually morning and evening as we were feeding our mules and horses, devouring the corn which we threw upon the ground. Some of the mules kept the interlopers at bay, but it required our united efforts, armed with great bludgeons, to get the remainder a quiet repast; and in doing so, we were frequently turned upon by those ferocious brutes, who imbued me during my short sojourn in their neighbourhood with a perfectly Jewish antipathy to the whole swinish multitude.

In our camp on the Line we became regularly drilled into the duties and customs of our new life, and, by mutual agreement, took upon ourselves the several branches of labour involved in the journey—some consenting to drive, some to cook, others undertaking to wash, patch, and mend clothes, harness, &c. &c. &c., but all obliged to take their regular spells at guard.

CHAPTER IV.

Start Monday, 16th April—Feeling on launching out on the Prairie—Description of the Scene—The lone Elm—Disappointment—Bull Creek—Soaking Rain Storm—Pleasing Scenery—Stick in the Mud—Unpleasant Quarters—Wolfish Serenade—Indian Creek—Handsome Landscape—Indian Visit—Crossing of the Wakarusa; its Difficulties—Coon Point—Prairie Spring—Game—Absence of the Buffalo; the Cause—Effect on Indian Population—The Shonganong—Bad Travelling—Break an Axle—Indian Settlement—Break a Tongue—Alarming Accident—Blacksmith's Shop and Residence—Trouble about getting him to Work—Reach the Kansas—Trading Post—Style of Trading there—Indian Fops—Ferry of the Kansas—Risk of Crossing—Catch some Fish—Beautiful Valley of the Kansas—Reflections—French Catholic Mission—Devotedness of the Rev. Father to his Flock and Pupils—Construct a temporary Viaduct—Approach the Pawnee Nation—Their Habits and Propensities—Attempt to steal our Animals—"The Vermilion"—Indian Interposition—Shoot Birds resembling Woodcock—Quantity of Wolves—Disappointment about the Position of the "Big Blue"—Bad Camping Ground—Miss one of our Men—Protracted and fatiguing Search—Cause of his Straying—Directions to prevent such Occurrences for the Future.

On Monday, the 16th of April, we fairly launched out on our long and arduous journey, like a small fleet leaving a roadstead for the vast and trackless ocean, and soon left in the dim distance the last haunts of our civilised brethren. An inexpressible feeling of silent contemplation seemed to pervade the entire company, as we proceeded without exchanging an observation for some hours. It was the first time that any of us had traversed the lonely pathways of the desert; and the solemn stillness of uninvaded nature, the measureless immensity of the regions around us, fenced only by the horizon, produced a contrast most striking and impressive, giving birth to emotions that required to be cradled in thought and reflection before they took flight in utterance.

As I cast my eye over the broad surface of the prairie, it looked like a perfect level; still it is a series of immense undulations, like the huge lazy swells of the Atlantic in a calm. Vegetation was only beginning to sprout, but though the herbage was short, it was deliciously green; there was no object to break the monotony of the view—no hill, no mound, no crag, or bush—until we came in sight of "The lone Elm," a solitary tree, that stands upon the margin of a pool, like an outcast from the forest. We approached the water as we would an unexpected banquet, but, to our great mortification, found the putrid carcase of an ox rotting in the middle of it, emitting a stench that even caused our animals to taste it daintily. We reached a camping ground, twenty-eight miles from the frontier, called Bull Creek, the point where the Santa Fe trail diverges in a south-westerly direction; and found tolerable grass about the stream, with a miserable habitation, and an Indian attempt at cultivation. Though favoured with a fine day, as night came in black heavy clouds and floating masses of watery vapour gave indication of a storm, which burst upon us just as we sat to supper, blowing a hurricane, and teeming down torrents of rain. It was perfectly useless to attempt pitching our tents, as they would be blown down; besides, the ground was running over with water, so that we could not sleep on it. We therefore took shelter in our waggons; and though I was thoroughly soaked when my guard was relieved, I went to sleep in my wet clothes, in a position not very conducive to repose, and awoke in the morning without any symptom of cold or sickness—a proceeding that would have been regarded at home as a species of suicide.

The morning opened finely, and we were after breakfast and in motion before seven o'clock; but the ground, saturated with the heavy rain, made the draught very severe. The country over which we passed to-day was more interesting, rising into more elevated slopes, and pleasingly diversified by the belts of timber that fringed the stream which ran across our path. It rather surprised me to find those rivulets so few and insignificant, considering the vast amount of drainage they have to carry off; which shows there must be a very porous subsoil, for the deluge of the previous night had no perceptible effect on their current.

We expected to reach the Wakarusa that night, but in crossing a dell where the water lodged our waggons got so embedded in the mud, and the footing for the mules became so soft and bad we were obliged to completely unload them, and carry the contents on our backs in small loads over to where there was firm ground, which occupied us until dark, necessitating us to take up our quarters on the spot, without water, except that which welled up in the waggon tracks or wheel ruts, which did not impart a very agreeable flavour to our coffee; but we had an excellent substitute for fire-wood in the dry weeds that covered the swamp, which ignited readily, throwing out a great heat and a brilliant light, and, I suppose, attracting packs of wolves, who favoured us with a most dismal serenade during supper, most provokingly prolonging it throughout the night to the confusion of the dreamers, and rendering it necessary to have a sharp look-out for the harness; for those ravenous animals would tear up all the softer portions of the leather unless they were driven off.

Next day we made a short stage, coming upon a fine fertile bottom, where, for the first time, we met anything like a growth of new grass. That was too tempting to pass by; as I thought a good cool repast after the dry, warm corn feeding, would be refreshing and invigorating to our animals. There was, besides, a further temptation in the wild loveliness of the spot, with a limpid rivulet, called Indian Creek, flowing along the base of a bold bluff, capped with timber, which held the sweet meadow in its embrace, on whose bosom the Indigo plant, with its pale blue flower, and the wild pink verbena, were just beginning to unfold their beauties, spangling the verdant carpet with their variegated hues. In the distance, to the south-east, a dense wood bounded the view, constituting a landscape that would not fail to charm the most enthusiastic admirer of natural scenery. We halted a second day in this lovely neighbourhood, and had a visit from some

Indians, whose huts were in the forest for the convenience of game, the deer being constrained to resort to the wood for pasture. As the natives in those districts burn the grass on the plains in order to concentrate them into a species of battu, they did not desire any food, but would take brandy if we gave it them; they were, however, content and grateful for some small presents of tobacco and beads.

The Wakarusa was only five miles distant; but there were several sloughs that crossed our route, compelling us to take long detours to avoid them, making our actual advance so inconsiderable, that it was noon before we got to the high banks overhanging that river, which is of a tolerable size compared with the other creeks and rivulets we passed. I should mention that the term "Creek" is applied in Western Prairie life to little streams or brooks, though its general signification is that of bay or indentation. The descent was a matter of extreme difficulty, from its excessive steepness and the sinuosities of the path; so we took out the two lead spans from each waggon, locked both hind-wheels, and held back with ropes attached to the axle; but even with these precautions it was a very risky undertaking. I stationed double teams at the bottom, hitched-to the instant the waggons landed before they got time to sink, which pulled them over, and up the opposite banks, by a liberal application of whipcord, and a storm of shouting and holloaing, at strange variance with the usual repose of the locality.

Those sort of obstacles materially enhanced the difficulties of our march, and made large gaps in our slow progress of waggon travelling.

The country now for some miles became hilly and broken, covered with a debris of gravel and loose round stones, of a dark reddish tint. There was one very elevated bluff, called "Coon Point," at the foot of which stands an abyss, with very good water; but we pushed on to a place called "Prairie Spring," situated at the head of a grassy ravine, from which we startled a small herd of deer that were slaking their thirst at the clear fountain. One of our party also flushed and shot a brace of prairie hens, a fine bird, somewhat larger than our grouse, but resembling it closely in shape and plumage; the flavour of their flesh was exquisitely delicate, forming a very welcome addition to our otherwise invariable fare of fried bacon.

Some years back, herds of buffalo used to roam in unrestrained freedom over those plains, slain only as the wants of food and raiment pressed upon the Indian; but so soon as the fur-trading companies commenced their traffic for the hides, they were slaughtered without regard to the flesh, and the hides bartered for beads and baubles, until the incessant warfare drove them back upon the banks of the Platt, leaving no substitute for food but the timid, wary deer. Whether the steady decrease in the Indian family is attributable to the decrease of their wonted sustenance cannot be well determined; but it is quite remarkable that since that period the population has been gradually getting thinner, some of the tribes becoming wholly extinct.

Next morning we ascended from the ravine to an elevated ridge of grassy land, along which we travelled ten or twelve miles, enjoying a magnificent prospect on each hand of the boundless plains, intersected with their little aqueous arteries and lines of timber, that in some places resembled the studied planting of large domains; and probably, at no very distant period, this untenanted paradise will be dotted with the abodes of the pale-face, and its solemn grandeur dispelled by the busy activity of industry and commerce. We directed our course to the upper crossing of the Kansas, at the Pottawattomee Mission, or Trading Post, as it is more generally called, diverging from the more frequented track towards a small river, called the "Shonganong," when our travelling became very difficult, from the entire absence of any path and the softness of the ground. The first branch of that river was altogether impassable, until we made a sort of corduroy sole, by cutting down trees and strewing their trunks on the bottom—an expedient we were also forced to adopt at the second branch, where we unfortunately broke an axle in one of the waggons; but, as we took the precaution of bringing a spare one to each, dressed, and ready for putting on, save the iron shoulders, which we took from the broken one, it was not so bad an accident as might be imagined; nevertheless, even with this facility, it occupied us till dark before all was set to rights.

There is a small settlement of christianised Indians between the forks of this river, under the immediate patronage of the missionaries; but their attempts at fencing and cultivation give bad promise of ultimate success; and the ménage of their household is quite on a par with their agricultural progress. They have had nice little log-houses erected for them, plainly furnished with chairs, tables, dressers, &c. &c. &c., all of which serve merely as ornaments, for they never use them, cooking their food in the primitive fashion, and squatting to their meals in preference to sitting at table. They have herds of small horses—animals of great endurance—but cannot be induced to keep or attend to any cows about the settlement, which, indeed, is not particularly well chosen, either in regard of the beauty of the situation or quality of the soil, being surrounded with sloughs and morasses, in one of which we broke a waggon-tongue the following morning, and well nigh lost a span of lead mules, who all but disappeared in the mire, the middle span falling over them and snapping the tongue, obliging us to cut off the harness hurriedly, and drag out the topmost ones with ropes, two men standing up to their armpits in mud, holding up the heads of the others to prevent their suffocation. This second accident caused great detention, for we had to apportion the loading of the crippled waggon amongst the other four, until we got as far as the smith's, about eight miles off, where we expected to have the fracture repaired. We now got into a very hilly country, sparely covered with timber, some of the descents being so abrupt, that the waggons ran down on the animals, even though double locked in the rough. We found the smith at home, in a very comfortable dwelling, with an excellent forge, established in Mission Creek, which flows through, and is fed by the seepage of those hills. Mr. Monday was surrounded with most of the comforts and necessaries of life; plenty of fine stock, abundance of fowl, excellent tillage, well-cropped gardens, and an illimitable scope of the finest grazing land. There were several Indians lounging about the premises and fiddling in the forge when we arrived, but none of them appeared to require the smith's services at that particular time, which led me to suppose we would have our job done off hand; however, Mr. Monday told me he durst not work for any but the Indians, unless by special leave from the States' agent, or the Indian appointed in that capacity by the tribe—rather a disagreeable piece of information, as the one was wholly inaccessible, and the other so very remote, that it would require two days to hunt him up. Monday, however, gave us permission to use his forge; and, though none of us ever attempted anything of the kind, we had no alternative but try; and we had actually commenced hammering out straps for the fractured tongue, when, to our great delight, the Indian chief was descried riding up. Monday stated our mishap to him; and, before he arrived, suggested the policy of a propitiative present; in compliance with which, I offered his highness a handsome sheath-knife, which he was graciously pleased to accept, telling Mr. Monday to inform us, "that, as we were travellers going on a journey beyond the great hills, he gave permission to him to repair the damage," a permission for which Mr. Monday subsequently demanded payment at a very exorbitant rate. We reached the banks of the Kansas at dusk the same evening, and had a levee of Indians and young half-castes from the trading-post round our camp-fires the most of the night, on whom we had to keep a sharp look out to prevent their pilfering propensities.

The trading post is a small hamlet, composed of some half-dozen shops, and a little straggling suburb of wigwams. The shops are kept by white men, licensed to supply the Indians around with the flimsy, fantastic, and trumpery articles they require; liquor being specially interdicted, and very properly so. But the same kindly solicitude that prohibits the sale of spirits, should take some measures to protect those unsophisticated people from the gross extortion, the vile imposition, practised on them in those establishments, into which the whole of the Indian pension money finds its way. Gaudy patterns of flimsy calico rating as high as the richest satin; saddles, bridles, and spurs, of the very commonest kind, fetching a higher price than padded quilted articles of the same manufacture; and beads, rings, whistles, and little looking-glasses, all selling in the same ratio. They give them out on credit till the quarter-day comes round, when the poor Indian punctually hands over his pension to those unconscionable harpies.

There are not many Indians living immediately at the trading-post; but the day after we came to the

Kansas, being Sunday, swarms of them came on their ponies from the various settlements around, the older amongst them wrapped in particoloured blankets, while most of the younger portion were given to grotesque dandyism, attired in ill-fitting American costume; the great feature of the dress, and the one on which they principally plumed themselves, being very lofty shirt-collars and projecting frills, adorned with great platter brooches of stained glass, which I supposed cost them as much as pure mother-o'-pearl. We were in expectation of getting a supply of mocassins here, but those educated country gentlemen now deem such occupations entirely beneath them, leaving mean employments of that kind to their unenlightened brethren in the far west.

Early the following morning we discharged our tender-waggon, dividing the corn that remained equally amongst our own five, and moved down close to the bank of the river, which is here over one hundred yards wide, tolerably deep, and flowing with a rapid current. One of the white traders, in anticipation of the emigration, having built what they call a skow, a large flat-bottomed boat, capable of carrying a waggon loaded, together with the team—a very unwieldy craft, propelled with long poles and clumsy oars, we chartered her for the occasion rather than run the risk of fording. The crossing entailed a vast deal of trouble and labour, first in getting the mules and waggons on board, then hauling the boat up stream near half a mile, to a point where the current, taking a shoot to the opposite shore, the painter was cast off, and she was swept down more than half a mile before she made a landing, then, after discharging her, she had again to be dragged up along the shore a considerable distance, drifting down again in the back passage, a series of operations that had to be gone through with the transportation of each waggon, and which tried our metal to the furthest. The loose animals we got over by swimming; one of our party taking soil on the bell-mare, who very soon was surrounded by her train of attendants.

We proceeded from the river a few miles up the valley of the Kansas, encamping on a quick clear stream, where we caught some fish. It is impossible to conceive a more lovely valley, lying between the river and a range of green grassy hills of most pleasing configuration, on whose brows myriads of delicate flowers, attracted by the genial smiles of spring, were peeping up amidst the sprouting herbage, with groves and clumps of timber budding into foliage, and blossoming shrubs skirting the plain along the stream, making it look like a favourite resting-place of nature, where I felt I could bury all aspirations of ambition, and, taking a long farewell of the busy world, spend the remainder of my days in sequestered happiness. And as, yielding to this blissful feeling, I lay down outside my tent on my prairie bed, gazing on the spangled canopy, which hung on high like a celestial chandelier in the heaven of heavens, the vastness of creation, and the omnipotence of the Almighty, filled my mind with a holy, reverential awe—a sweet transport of devotional meditation

—I never before experienced, causing me to imagine, when breathing my prayers before this resplendent altar, that I was more directly communing with the throne of Divine grace than in the carved and gilded temples of man.

There is a French Catholic mission at the extremity of the vale—the most advanced post of Christianity on the prairie—where the worthy minister has established a school in the little log chapel; and as I entered I found him in the midst of his half-tamed scholars, labouring to impart the blessings of education, with a fervid zeal emanating from the purest sources of philanthrophy, without any worldly incentive to feed it, or any reward but the consolations of a happy conscience.

Another obstacle to our progress presented itself here,* in an immense tree, which was blown down in a deep gully that crossed our path, just in the place where the crossing was easiest. Its great size forbade any attempt at removing it, so we set all hands to work with spades and shovels, cutting an incline in each bank, which we accomplished much sooner than I expected, the deep rich black loam having neither a rock or stone commingled with it, being dug into like a turf bank. We also cut down some middle-sized trees to fill it up, as it was so narrow at the bottom the waggon perches would be in danger of breaking. From this we had five or six miles of very bad travelling, over a half-dried morass, the wheels frequently cutting through the sod to the axles; we managed, however, to pull through, and reached first-rate camping ground before dark, on a nice cool stream, where the pasture was excellent and the scenery charming.

As we were now drawing close to the confines of the Pawnee nation—a tribe notorious for their adroitness in thieving—I caused the animals to be picketed compactly, in order that the guard could watch them more securely—a precaution opportunely adopted, for in the middle of the night we were all aroused by the sharp crack of a rifle, discharged after two of those savages, who crawled on their bellies in amongst the mules, and cutting two of the lariats, were in the act of leading them off, when the uneasiness of the remainder brought one of the guard to the spot in time to prevent the theft. He only got a glance at the Indians as they plunged into the thicket, but fired after them, with what effect we had no means of judging. We saw several rattlesnakes about our camp in the morning, and killed two of a very large size.

We nooned next day at the Vermilion, a good-sized stream, running over a red sandstone bottom, that imparts the appearance of a reddish hue to its waters, from which I suppose it derives its name, though in reality the water is as clear as crystal. Having made it a point whenever I met any person who could talk English or make intelligible signs, to get all the information I could respecting our route; and in answer to my inquiries at the mission, being given to understand that from the Vermilion to the Blue we would not find either wood or water; I prudentially gave instructions that each waggon should take in a supply of those indispensable articles, when some Indians coming past, and observing, with their usual acuteness, what we were about, made signs to us to stop, motioning to us that "there was plenty of both beyond the hills, which we would reach this sun." At first I was disinclined to run the risk; but as we had some very sharp ascents before us, and the loads were still heavy, I trusted to their gestures, nor was I disappointed, as we found a sweet purling brook and plenty of firewood.

We here shot several birds, most exactly resembling our own woodcock in size, plumage, and conformation; in fact, there was no traceable dissimilarity, nor, according to my palatal reminiscences, was there any difference of taste in the flesh; but the haunts and habits of the bird, associating in flocks on a naked plain, in the warm season, was so totally different from the woodcock, I could not believe in the identity. No one can appreciate the luxury of fresh meat so well as he that has been for weeks on salt rations; and believe me I enjoyed my modicum of the game, with a most relishable *goût*. An apprehension of being devoured by wolves disturbed our slumbers, such amazing numbers of them kept prowling and yowling about our camp all night. We shot two of them of a large size; well-knit animals, that would, I think, be a match for the strongest mastiff in a single encounter. They are very fleet, and possessed almost of the sagacity of the fox.

At sunrise next morning we were all astir, and had breakfast disposed of, in order to be in time at the "Big Blue" (a large river), and cross it before dark. It is laid down by explorers as thirteen miles from the Vermilion, leaving it, by computation, seven from our camping-ground. We started early, and travelled steadily for three hours, making, according to our average of two and one-half miles an hour, some eight miles, when we met a lively limpid stream, shaded by fine elms and sycamore-trees; but its dimensions forbade the idea of its being the "Big Blue;" so we continued our course, constantly expecting to see indications of a large river ahead. The country all around was bleak and naked, high, rolling, unburnt prairie; but we persevered until the sun's course and our poor animals were near run down, without discovering the slighest appearance of it; and although I sent out our horsemen in different directions in quest of camping-ground, they were unable to find any better than a green stagnant pool, round the margin of which there was a dry coarse grass, that made sufficient fire to boil our coffee, those who were under the control of appetite being obliged to eat their bacon raw. We skimmed off the slime from the water, and strained the dirty fluid through the tail of a waggon-sheet, which cleansed it somewhat; but it still retained an abominable vegetable taste, which we endeavoured to smother by putting in an extra quantity of coffee. After helping ourselves we let the animals take their turn, and, by the time they had done, the stuff left was of the consistence of molasses, leaving us without the means of making a hot breakfast in the morning, and confining our fare to raw bacon and hard bread.

In calling over the roll in the evening, we were all alarmed at the absence of one of the party, who did not answer to his name, or return the signal of a gun-shot. No one could tell the cause of his leaving camp, nor could I clearly ascertain if he came up with the train. Having no wood to light fires for his guidance, our only alternative was to sally out in various directions, hallooing and firing to attract his attention; and after a two hours' search, he was found at a long distance from camp; but as the party that met him could not communicate their good fortune to the others, they continued their search until morning, being, in reality, unable to find their own way back to quarters until the sun got up, and even then not without great trouble, so difficult is it to make one's way to any particular point without any landmark to guide you in those interminable plains. The cause of all this trouble and anxiety followed a pack of prairie hens until he lost his reckoning, and then getting confounded and alarmed as darkness closed upon him, set off at a brisk pace, turning his back on the place he wished to gain. I was more annoyed at the occurrence, as most of the party were so fagged they were badly able to travel, without even the comfort of a good breakfast after their night's fatigue; but the inhospitable region where we were constrained us to push on in search of better quarters. I gave directions that, for the future, parties going out to hunt should be at least made up of three persons, for, independent of the danger of going astray, stragglers were in danger of being cut off by Indians, who from thenceforward were not to be overtrusted.

CHAPTER V.

Second Start for the "Big Blue"—Prairie on Fire—Frightful Appearance impossible to describe—Indian Camp—Abundance of Fish—Jokes about the "Blue"—Dry Weather—Council—Dreadful Thunderstorm—Glorious Dawn—Beautiful Basin—Wolf Chase, and extraordinary Accident—The real "Big Blue" at last—Most melancholy Occurrence—Reflections on the sad Event—Commencement of the Musquito Nuisance—Fertile Neighbourhood—Lay by a Day—Hurricane—Wild Turkey Chase—Number of Rattlesnakes—Our Fears of them—Missing Horses found—Indications of Buffalo—May Morning Thoughts of Home—Lovely Landscape—Quantity of Plover—One of the Party bit by a Snake—Bad Camping-Ground—Sudden Change of Temperature—Indian Wigwams—Their Shyness a bad Augury of their Intentions—Supposed Attack—Indians watching us—Surprise them—Slight Skirmish—Fish and Fowl plenty—Wagtails Enemies to Constipation—Navicular Disease, how guarded against.

It was late before we started, but we made certain the river ran on the other side of a range of barren hills, about eight miles distant; it took us three hours to gain their summit, from which we had an extensive view, without, however, any sign or symptom of the "Big Blue," as far as the eye could penetrate into the distance; so I reluctantly came to the conclusion that the river we passed last evening was the one in question, but that we struck at a different point from others, whose estimate of distances confounded us. We observed from this eminence a dusky appearance in front, but were unable to determine at the time whether it was smoke or a low black cloud; however, as we approximated, our doubts were soon resolved; it was smoke emanating from a prairie on fire right in our track, the flames travelling rapidly towards us, with a favourable breeze. I immediately ordered the prairie to leeward of us to be fired in several places, and the bell-mare to be caught, who with the loose animals were betraying symptoms of alarm, that I feared would cause them to stampede; meanwhile the fire came down upon us, roaring, extending north and south about three miles, presenting a grand, but terrific spectacle. The next move was to get the waggons into the space cleared by our own fire, and make the mules and horses firmly fast to the wheels. The smoke came drifting before the flames in dense hot wreaths as we secured the lariats,* the animals snorting and shaking with dread; and some of them rearing in affright, and breaking the tyings, bolted away wildly, until they overtook the flames behind them, when they rushed frantically back, plunging in amongst those that remained. The heat now became excessively uncomfortable, for our line was not over fifteen yards from the edge of the unburnt grass to windward, and we could not back the waggons without loosening the animals. As the devouring element came closer, burning wisps were carried in the air, endangering our waggon covers and the powder-casks; but the heat became so intense we were forced to leave them to their fate, and prostrate ourselves, the smoke now gleaming with a murky flame, at a perfectly singeing temperature, producing a difficulty of breathing, that threw Mr. M——n (a gentleman with delicate lungs) into convulsions. But those dreadful moments quickly passed away; a few more seconds and the last blade of grass was consumed, and the monster that threatened to lick us into his flaming throat vanished with the wind, leaving a bald and blackened plain around us. I had often read descriptions of prairies on fire, and thus became familiar with the proper mode of acting in such an emergency; but the graphic pen of Washington Irving, or the eloquent portraiture of Cooper, are tame and feeble as compared with the awful reality.

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* Long halters.

It behoved us now to be on the alert, as but a few hours of the day remained, and, from the course of the fire, we could not expect to find any pasture for several miles; we therefore pushed along at a double-quick pace, until we descried a belt of timber on an apparently level plain, without hills or bluffs that would indicate a large river, where we found a stream of considerable size, with water the clearest I ever remember to have seen, even in a still well, and swarmed with fish, which we could see as plainly as birds in the air, darting about as we went into the ford. There were marks of a recent Indian encampment on the banks, at which no doubt the fire originated, for the prairie was burned just to that point, and no further. We formed ours on the opposite bank, and had a glorious fish repast on shad and catfish, which I eat for the first time, and found them excellent. Having caught as many at a few draughts as furnished supper, and breakfast the next morning, this welcome change of diet put us all in good humour; and the evening passed away pleasantly, our wild bivouac resounding with the jocund song and the ringing laugh at the expence of those who were obstinate in their opinions that the river of yesterday was the "Big Blue," one and all having agreed that the waters now flowing past us were those of that river, notwithstanding that its position did not tally with that assigned to it by trappers and explorers, nor its volume correspond with the recorded dimensions of the "Blue."

Since our first night's drenching on "Bull Creek," when we devoutly anathematised hail, rain, and sleet, we had not a shower or shade of lowering weather; but, like all capricious mortals, we had been heaving pluvial sighs for the last few days, which at long last attracted the sympathy of the elements, and brought down copious tears of compassion on our bereavement.

Before retiring to our buffalo robes, all assembled in my tent to examine the vacuous map of those regions, and ascertain the probable distance to the Platte, as well as shape our course, and agree upon camping points. While thus engaged, the rain pattered more heavily on the canvas, and at intervals a low growling of distant thunder came along like a mighty piece of ordnance in the heavens, rumbling louder and louder as it approximated, until it exploded with a bursting crash above our heads, that promptly broke up our council of travel. Brilliant coruscations from above flashing through the tent-cloth, betwixt the discharges paling the weak light of the lamp; and as I went to the door to look on this awe-striking phenomenon, black fields of cloud hovered in the sky, fringed with a halo from the bright fires that glared behind them, opening momentarily in seams of livid light, and emitting spiral pillars of vivid fire, adown which, fancy would discover torrents of electric fluid pouring into the thirsty earth. It was a scene of surpassing sublimity, such as I never before witnessed; but its violence soon expended its fury, leaving us, ere midnight, a glorious starlit firmament.

A most delightful morning succeeded, and all nature seemed refreshed from the rain; the plains clothed with a delicious verdure, the lovely flowrets expanding their virgin bosoms, and emitting their fragrance in the balmy air, the sod beautifully elastic for travelling, and even the animals, I thought, looking sleek and glossy. We had breakfast over, our waggons greased, and teams tackled by seven o'clock, and set out, as we thought, in quest of another river, the course of which is more accurately laid down than the "Blue." After travelling about eight miles, we came to a pebbly brook, flowing through a basin of the richest land we met yet, not even excepting the fertile valley of the Kansas, its velvet carpet decked out in a most gorgeous garniture of floral beauty. The larkspur, the wild pink verbena, the wild blue bean, and various others strange to me. I looked about for the familiar primrose, but it was nowhere to be found; nor do I think it might have hidden its head amongst any of its foreign competitors, whose sweet perfume was overmatched by the pungent odours of the wild onion, which I met frequently before, but never in such quantity or maturity. We gathered a large quantity, which gave an agreeable relish to our standing dish, and were productive of other effects of a desirable nature in our long vegetable abstinence. In going up the hill, I observed an animal stealing away in the long grass that bordered the brooks, and taking an off-hand rifle crack at him, materially quickened his pace, and extracted a sample of his vocalism. It turned out to be a wolf; and seeing, by his going lame, that he was wounded, all the horsemen gave chase, running him so close that they kept peppering him with their revolvers until they brought him down; but, in the careless eagerness of the chase, a misdirected or rebounding ball struck the nose of one of the horses, who made so sudden a curve that he unseated his rider, Mr. J——y, one of the most timid of our party, who was always holding forth about Indian surprises and ambuscades. A wag amongst the lot, seeing him fall, raised the shout of "Indians—Indians," and headed a retreat to the waggons at a furious pace, leaving my little friend "alone in his glory;" but, fearing the alarm might prove too serious a shock for his nerves, I went back to his relief, cantering up the rise to meet or hail him; however, he was nowhere to be seen. I then galloped across to the opposite hill, from which I had an extensive reconnoissance; but still he was not within view. I next made the horsemen scatter about, returning myself to the dead wolf, the place at which the accident occurred, and shouted lustily, the horsemen joining in the call at the top of their lungs, without eliciting a response or appearance. I now began to feel somewhat nervous; but knowing from the time, distance, and expansive view, he could not have been carried off by Indians, I ordered and commenced a close search, which, considering that the herbage was short, and little or no cover for hiding, I felt assured would bring him to light; in fact, there was no place for concealment but a dry gully, about two feet and a half deep, bare of either reed or brushwood. Up this I rode without discovering a trace, when I became exceedingly puzzled and uncomfortable. On returning, however, I observed a fresh break in the surface, which I dismounted to examine, one of my companions observing it occurred in the chase; but not seeing any horse track near it, I stooped to scrutinise it closely, and conceived I saw a sort of pulsation, upon which I gave the long sod a drag, and down came about seven feet of a strip, revealing our missing friend, in a most pitiable plight. As soon as he recovered, he told us, believing the alarm to be genuine, he thought escape on foot beyond hope, and seeing the overhanging bank in the gully, he crawled under it, but giving its edge a pull the more effectually to perfect his concealment, he brought down a fleak more than his strength was able to remove, and would have been smothered if there had been any loose earth or sand attached to it. At times, he said, he heard the muffled sound of voices, but could not distinguish whether they were Indians or not; and such was his veneration for his scalp, he preferred dying by the slow process of suffocation, rather than disclose his hiding-place. He was too much of a sufferer to be a fit subject for joking; nevertheless, it was impossible to refrain from laughter as we thought of all the circumstances, and saw that he was unhurt.

We ascended from the basin to a high, undulating prairie, where there was a fine crop of upland grass, the first we met with. The soil was lighter than I had before seen, being only a few inches deep, on a dark flint-stone stratum, which occasionally peeped through the surface, like the limestone tracts in the west of Ireland. We had not travelled far before I saw a range of timbered bluffs, and soon perceived a large valley, thickly wooded with maple, cotton wood, elm, oak, and sycamore. This I set down as the camping-ground fifteen miles from the "Blue," and cantered ahead to select a location for our night's lodging, when, lo! and behold, I came to a real veritable river, and no mistake, larger than the aggregate of all the creeks and streams we had passed. As the train came up "we looked each other's faces round," and from the prevailing complexion I saw we all tacitly acquiesced in the conviction that at long last we had arrived at the "Big Blue," though many, many miles west of the position assigned it. It was a formidable stream to cross as well from its width as rapidity, but the in and out was tolerably easy. I rode on to take soundings, and select the shoalest ford, but only proceeded a few lengths when I got fairly aswim, and my horse, wheeling round with the current, went over on his beam ends, giving me a regular souse and a great start, as for an instant one of my feet caught in the stirrup, but fortunately got extricated, else I should have been inevitably drowned, as I would be incapable of making any exertion—a lesson which taught me, on all subsequent occasions, to cast my feet loose before going into rivers or swamps, to be free for any accident that might turn up.

Making certain from what occurred that the water would reach our waggon beds, and damage the provision, those attached to the leading one commenced unloading, to place on the top what was most susceptible of injury, when, melancholy to relate, a fine young fellow, John Coulter, in drawing out a loaded gun by the muzzle, brought the cock sharply in contact with a box, which caused it to explode, sending thirteen buck-shot clean through his body, instant death ensuing. The gloom that overspread us all was greater, I imagine, than if he met his fate in the haunts of civilisation, where a Christian burial would consign his remains to consecrated ground. But we dug his lonely grave beside a large elm close to the spot where he fell, and with uncovered heads and tearful eyes lowered his rude coffin into its isolated resting-place, carving his epitaph on the bark of the tree that overshadowed this tomb of the wilderness. What rendered reflection more distressing was, that we afterwards discovered a ford that superseded the necessity of any alteration in the loading.

After a short but mournful pause, we commenced the passage, which was attended with considerable danger and difficulty; however, we got over without damage or accident. One small lead-span in the third waggon got afloat, and for a moment looked as if they would be hurried into the deep below them; but, like good-'*uns*, they headed for the right spot, and pulled out without a stop. Not a sound of voice or whip was heard in the crossing, and the same respectful tribute of silence was continued throughout the night to the memory of our departed comrade, who was esteemed and liked more generally than any member of the party; and as I marched round during my watch, under the pale scant light of a new moon, I never remember to have been so religiously impressed with the fleeting folly of earthly pursuits and anxieties, and the duty of at least dividing our solicitude and time in laying up treasures for a world to come; and yet, when I asked my conscience would it undertake a pilgrimage of 3000 miles over desert plains, encountering crosses, enduring mortifications, fording dangerous rivers, sleeping on the wet ground, tortured by musquitoes, in danger of the poisonous snake, and apprehensive of the savage Indian, solely in expectation of a reward hereafter? I could extract but a reluctant assent, while it bounded with impulse at the idea of an acquisition which admittedly makes the attainment of an eternal reward more uncertain and difficult—the camel and the needle giving way to the needle that pointed out the course to the mammon of iniquity.

Our camp to-night was close beside a grove, which appeared to be the head-quarters of the musquito tribe, for they hummed and buzzed in myriads about us, watching every opportunity of inflicting a wound. One is tolerably able, if his hands and attention are not otherwise employed, to defend himself in daylight; but their "inextinguishable hatred" pursues its victims throughout the night as well, and, if sleep should close your eyelids, unlike the agreeable results of Queen Mab's tittilations, you dream of needles and daggers, and start into stinging consciousness from the terror of being empaled on bayonets. It was amusing, spite of all the torture, to listen to the remarks and exclamations of the sufferers; and it is positively wonderful, that an insect so slender in all its proportions, can inflict so severe a sting, drawing blood through your coat: even the thick skin of a horse not being proof against its scarce visible lance. Unlike the fly, which only settles on the exposed surface of the skin, they go up the legs of your trousers and under the bedclothes; nor can any musquito bar wholly exclude them, for they will worm themselves into an aperture that you would suppose too small to admit an ant. Though we were pretty well tired, sleep was out of the question; so we all arose and made a monster fire, round which we got some relief.

Next day we lay by, our animals luxuriating in fine pasture, and ourselves enjoying rich treats of shad and catfish, together with wild ducks and parroquets, which were very abundant. We saw some deer bounding through the brakes, but could not manage to get within range of them. There were great quantities of the Indian or prairie potato about; a small but highly farinaceous esculent, too sweet for most of our palates. The wild hop spreading its vines thickly amongst the trees, and amidst them thickets of wild plums covered with blossoms that gave promise of great abundance, the fruit of which I understand grows to a good size, and is of excellent flavour. Abundance of clover grew up amongst the indigenous grasses, some of which resembled closely our Italian rye-grass.

The wind during the evening was very high, but resembled a hot blast in its temperature—so much so, that the first guard turned out unmuffled, the others retiring to rest without any covering whatsoever. About ten o'clock, however, strange meteoric appearances began to present themselves in the north—the opposite point to that from which the wind was blowing—gradually becoming more wide-spread and livid; when suddenly a small black speck emerged from the horizon, and, with the quickness of thought, the wind ran round to that quarter, increasing to a perfect hurricane, blowing down the tents, scattering hats, pots, kettles, blankets, and buffalo robes over the plain, tearing one of the waggon covers into shreds, and turning one clean over; while the embers and the coals carried about set fire to the underwood, which soon spread into a lake of flame, engaging several large decaying trees in the conflagration. It was a terrific sight, and so affrighted the stock, that most of them pulled up their picket-pins, galloping about, snorting and puffing, and keeping us busily engaged until daylight in looking after them. After morning broke, it took us some hours to hunt up our truant traps; but many were missing, which I think were carried into the flames and consumed.

It was afternoon before the gale abated sufficiently to admit of travelling, and there was nothing of variety in the scenery, nor incident worth recording, unless it was a turkey chase, in which a fine bird was fairly run down. This bird, particularly when fat, cannot rise on the wing more than once, and then only for a short flight; but they make excellent use of their shanks, which are very lengthy, for by the time the one in question was caught, its pursuers were nearly piped out. It proved to be in very different condition from that shot on the Missouri, and as delicate as it was fat.

About twelve miles from the Blue we came to a nameless creek of most inviting aspect, so far as ourselves were concerned; but as there was no grass, the district around being recently burned, we pushed on a few miles further, where, on the contrary, the pasture was abundant, but the wood and water remote. I shot a brace of prairie snipe, which, though out of season, were very much in place, and in the course of the evening we killed three large rattlesnakes, of the most poisonous genus, quite close to our tents, which begat a nervousness lest some other members of that family should pay us a visit in our slumbers. There were several plants of the cactus, or prickly pear, about here, of a size that would make our home horticulturists stare, and acres of wild onion in an advanced stage of maturity. The night was bitterly cold, and morning found us all ashiver, with three of our horses missing. The delay arising from which circumstance was the more disagreeable, as the exercise of travelling would have warmed and promoted the circulation.

After taking a cast about, we hit on the track of the horses towards the water, where we made sure of finding them; in which we were disappointed, and began to entertain fears that the Indians had got hold of them. But riding a few miles further to where I saw some timber, I joyfully descried the missing steeds, enjoying themselves in a magnificent pasturage; but by the time I got with them back to camp it was close upon noon, and as it was the second morning after one entire day's rest that we had a late start, I resolved on travelling till sundown, approaching which time we fortunately came to a clear, well-timbered brook. The country all day was of a level, monotonous character, without a feature of interest to call for observation.

For the first time we thought we here discovered symptoms of buffalo, which put us all on the qui-vive; some longing for the sport and novelty of the chase, and others talking in juicy accents of the luxury of a fine hump-steak. Our fires at night attracted some elk, bringing them within range; but as they were in line with the animals we durst not fire. At daylight we saw another herd crossing a ridge of rising ground, and three of our horsemen started in pursuit; however, as there was no cover, they could not get within shooting distance.

May morning opened calm and cloudless; and as I looked around on the measureless tracts of old withered grass, unbroken by any striking object, unenlivened by any living thing, I thought of home, with its green lanes and hedge-rows of blossoming white thorn evaporating its dew-distilled perfume in the rising sun, and the weedless crops, and the shamrock-coated fields, and the frisking lambs and the woodland choristers; but the cracking of the teamsters' whips as they started recalled me from this agreeable reverie, directing my attention into a widely different channel.

The country to-day was more rolling, with a tendency upwards, until we attained a considerable elevation, which commanded a charming prospect, more diversified with wood and water than any I had yet seen, relieving the wearied eye with its pleasing verdure. Knolls of gigantic dimensions, covered with fine timber in young foliage, being irregularly scattered over the plain, which was intersected with numbers of streamlets, all tributaries of the "Little Blue;" clumps of trees standing here and there in the different angles formed by their courses, all it required to complete its pastoral charms being the flocks and herds, and the neat, but upretending cottage of the shepherd peeping from the shady grove. As we crossed the last of those rivulets, we let all the animals, in and out of harness, drink their fill, and took in a supply of wood and water, so that we could stop wherever the pasture was good. It was verging in the dim twilight when we reached a green sward, which, like the hospitable sign of a wayside boniface, induced the wearied travellers to stop.

A stand of prairie plover most opportunely made their appearance as we pulled up, all the tamer from the dim light, who were received by a simultaneous volley of balls and shot, that brought down as many as thirteen brace. They were in splendid condition—a size bigger than our plover, and a shade browner in plumage, but otherwise strictly alike. There were also indications which we set down as proofs of buffalo being in the neighbourhood, which kept us on the alert and look-out, some of the over-sanguine transforming every dark object into one of those animals; and, sooth to say, I do believe, when the mind is satiated in contemplating an unvarying sameness for several days, that it is more plastic, and prone to be the slave of our desires. We also discovered tracks of not quite so agreeable a character—the mocassin prints of a party of Indians, that must have recently crossed the dried-up bed of a neighbouring stream, which caused us for the first time to entertain positive apprehensions for the safety of our animals. One of our party got bit by a rattlesnake this evening; but, having a huge pair of stout leather boots, the fangs did not penetrate to the flesh. They, as well as large lizards, were very plentiful about our camp, but we were latterly becoming so used to them, we lost all apprehension about their entering our tents in the night. Not so the musquitoes, who forced their way through smoke and flame, as each mess now lit fires opposite their tent doors (which the guard watched and kept alive) in expectation of excluding them; but the moment a current of air swayed the smoke in an opposite direction, a swarm of those untiring tormentors gained an entrée.

Next day's course was over a dreadfully hilly country, unadorned by bush or bramble; it was nothing but lock and unlock every half mile till noon, when we descended upon a level, bleak, unburt prairie, which in its dry and withered clothing of last year's grass had a most disagreeable aspect. We met no water since our start, and both men and animals were suffering from thirst; but, after travelling some miles further, one of the buffalo maniacs discovered some pools of stagnant stuff at right angles with our trail. Neverthless we diverged in obedience to that despotic appetite, and found the green water absolutely alive with wagtails, as those piscious animalculæ are called; however, like the modern painters, not being over particular as to a shade or so, we drank it with avidity, though the mules sucked it in slowly, as if they filtered it through their teeth. Had we travelled on a mile further, we would have got a grateful drink of cool, pellucid water; but there is yet no hand-book of those unfrequented trails by which the wayfarer can time his wants.

Before us, in the distance, was a line of high land, that we knew must be the dividing ridge, beyond which the drainage tended to the "Little Blue," which, unlike its larger namesake, did not deceive us or evade our quest. Near the point where we struck it, three tributaries joined it from different directions, emerging in noisy haste from their umbrageous banks, and forming a most pleasing spectacle. We travelled the remainder of the day close along it, amidst fragrant groves of wild plums in full blossom, the temperature so warm we discarded vests and neck-ties; but about five o'clock, with the rapidity of a magician's presto, the sun was blown out by a cold, drear south-east squall, and, ere we could get our coats from the waggons, we were thoroughly drenched, the drops being so large as to scare the mules, who, maugre all our efforts, turned right round until they got their sterns to the gale; the rain soon cleared off, but the cold continued at a chattering temperature. We stopped at the first sheltered bend, and found about a dozen wigwams, empty, but nearly warm, they were so lately occupied. This, to use a Yankee vulgarism, made us "keep our eyes skinned," as there was no doubt the wily Pawnee thief was in the neighbourhood. The storm continued unabated throughout the night and next morning; but, as all the grass about was clipped close, we were compelled to move on. Very soon after our start we came upon the remains of a very large Indian encampment, which it was evident was hastily vacated, and that, too, within eight or ten hours, as, in many of the heaps of ashes, the embers were still alive. From the number of cotton-wood trees cut down, they must have had a number of horses, and purposed remaining there a considerable time, for those hardy animals—the Indian ponies—subsist on the soft milky bark of that tree during the winter and spring until the new grass grows up.

This coy conduct of the Indians was an unfavourable augury of their intentions; for, if disposed to be friendly, they come to camp to trade or beg, and travel with the party perhaps for many miles, from motives of curiosity, or looking out for opportunities to steal. I therefore conceived it prudent to have all the arms looked up and loaded, ordering each man but the drivers to carry his full complement, and all spare guns to be laid in the most convenient positions in the front of the waggons, for, as our route lay up a narrow strip, with the river on one hand and a range of bluffs on the other, it looked a favourable district for a surprise. Two men rode ahead to reconnöitre, two more brought up the rear, the balance being along the waggons. We proceeded thus for some time in silence, when the crack of a rifle from the advanced party led us to suppose the affray had commenced. Every man now handed and cocked his rifle; and as we rounded an angle of planting, in close column, we saw the horsemen dismounted, stooping over a prostrate body, which, however, to our great gratification, turned out to be the carcase of a fine deer, which was hastily cut up and equally distributed. As we proceeded, I remarked two dark objects over the ridge, about the size of men's heads; and seeing them moving occasionally, I suspected they were Indian spies; a surmise which the glass confirmed. There was no use in endeavouring to steal on them, for all our motions were easily discernible; so I ordered up five of our best mounted men, who, with myself, rode forward, as if pursuing our journey, to a point where the slope was easiest, where, like contending jockies coming to the post, we set off at top-speed. The distance up was less than half a mile; and when we gained the summit, we saw a party of about twenty-five, in full retreat on their small horses; until as we made a sudden bend for a more direct course, they at once pulled up, as we conjectured, to give fight; but a few strides more explained the motives of their conduct, my horse, who was leading, going chest into a moss-covered morass, canting me over his head with great violence, which caused the other horses, of their own accord, to stop suddenly, unhorsing another man, whose rifle went off in the fall.

This emboldened the Indians, who began to approach, discharging a few arrows at long range, which came rather accurately; but over sixty yards they can be easily dodged, as they lose their impetus beyond that distance. I was apprehensive, though, lest our horses should get wounded, not knowing but their arrows were poisoned; and as they persisted in coming closer, we fired two shots, taking deliberate aim at the one appearing most like the chief: they went off with a single report, one taking effect somewhere about the pony's head, and the other in the bridle-arm of the rider, which soon altered their course, causing them to fly with great precipitancy, occasionally looking round to see if we pursued. My horse could not be extricated without getting ropes and help from the waggons, nor even then without great difficulty: and was so exhausted by his own and our exertions as to be unable to travel; so we came to camp, when I returned, making a very short day's march of it.

We employed the remainder of the evening profitably as well as pleasurably, killing catfish in great quantity; and in the morning were gratified at finding all our night-hooks tenanted, affording us quite an epicurean breakfast. Amongst the fish on the night-hooks was a species of pike, called pickeril, which has a vast advantage over its relative, both in flavour and paucity of bones.

We still continued our course, with the river close under our lee, plover becoming so abundant, we were gladly enabled to give the salt junk a holiday, which contributed to improve our health and spirits. After a few hours' travel we diverged from the "Blue," which took a sharp southerly sweep, and moored at a large flash of water, round which there was glorious feed; but the liquid was green, and full of wagtails: we were partly reconciled to its use, however, hearing that those little mites were active enemies to constipation, a malady then troubling the majority of the company. Two of the waggons here began to exhibit the effects of travel, in loose tires; but this was soon rectified, more uneasiness arising from the lameness of two of our best wheel mules, who appeared footsore for the last few days, and now began to limp outright; but on taking up their fore-feet, I found them panged with hard tough clay, in lumps, as horses gather snowballs, preventing altogether the action of the frog, so necessary to ease and elasticity of gait, and certain at last to produce that incurable affection called navicular disease. I dug them out with a small chisel; and the moment they were removed the mules moved with perfect freedom. Every night afterwards I had the hoofs of all the work animals cleaned out; and I think all travellers would act prudently in doing likewise.

CHAPTER VI.

Mirage—"Little Blue" again—Rainstorm—Appearance of the Camp—Delightful Scenery—Reflections—Observance of the Sabbath—Fresh-water Turtle—Indians take the shape of Wolves—Kill an Antelope—Visit of the Pawnees—Their Appearance—Short Description of the Tribe—Their mode of Trading—Ugly Women—Pelican—Bluffs of the Platte—Saline Efflorescenses—Grand Island—Dig for Water—Musquitoes again—Their pertinacity—Novel Wager—Fort Kearney—American Soldiers—Profitable price of Whisky—Battle-ground of the Sioux and Pawnees—Seagulls Island—Hurricane and Thunderstorm—Stampede—Disagreeable Night—More Crystalised Incrustations—Prairie Dog Town—Appearance and Habits of the Animal—Accident to the Mules—Use of Lariats—Scarcity of Firewood—Unerring Signs of Buffalo—Amazing size of the Herds—Ineffectual Attempt to cross the Platte after them.

WE saw to-day the celebrated optical illusion called mirage, so often seen and described by travellers over deserts and extensive plains. It was so wonderfully well defined, and in such apparent proximity, resembling a large grove of majestic trees in full foliage, that if it arose in advance, and not exactly in the track over which we passed a little before, I would have been actually deceived in the full and perfect belief of their reality. Now and then a change took place in their postures, and again in their density, openings occurring in which the glassy surface of a lake would appear, reflecting on its polished bosom the surrounding timber, while on its distant shores the hazy outlines of a large city were spread out, taking the shape of massive buildings, domes, and steeples. It remained perceptible in its various phases for fully a quarter of an hour, and some of the party were so obstinate in their convictions as to its being a *bonâ fide* view, they actually rode in hunt of the shadow, but found it, as one of them described it, an "illigant representation of nothin' at all."

Towards evening we came across our old acquaintance the "Little Blue," where we camped in a delightful dell. The water so quickly shoaling, that no large fish came to repay our patience; we were consoled, though, by a fresh supply of plover. The evening closed so mildly none of us took the trouble of erecting our tents, spreading our bedding on the velvet carpet, with our heads pillowed on the scented flowers; but towards morning, as it came to my turn to mount guard, it came down a regular soaker, falling in perpendicular torrents, without a breath of air to slant it; yet the men were not much disturbed by it, sleeping on heroically, merely pulling in their heads under the blankets as the great drops plashed upon their faces. When the sun shone out shortly after, I could not help gazing on the different couches, which smoked like melon-beds in its warm rays; nevertheless, they all arose healthy, cheerful, and hungry.

As we rolled along next day we got into a most gorgeous valley, where we saw several new varieties of floral beauties, amongst which I recognised the daisy and two faces under a hood. The wild plum blossomed gloriously amidst the tall and stately timber, and the full round notes of the blackbird, with a warbling chorus of the smaller tribe of choristers, made up a sylvan concert, whose melody fell sweetly on the ear and stole over the senses with an enchanting pleasure—a chastened transport, that could only be felt in the pure theatre of nature, sequestered and apart from the influences of sophisticated associations. Detached parks of planting stood away in the background around this lovely scene; and green slopes, the types of luxuriant repose, made me almost envy the child of the wilderness the voluptuous garden bestowed upon him by a bountiful Providence, beside which the pigmy efforts of man were as time compared with eternity. Taking it "for all and all," I gave this day's travel the palm for beautiful scenery over any other since we crossed the Line.

It was the Sabbath morning, but, being composed of different sects, any joint observance of that holy day was not enforced, each being left to commune with his Creator in what form of prayer he listed. The scarcity of grass disabled us from making it a day of rest; however, it was agreed that hunting, fishing, or such like amusements should be abstained from on all Sundays for the future—the smallest tribute we could pay to the Deity for the indulgence and protection deigned us in our trying undertaking.

Elk, antelope, and deer, were now more frequently seen, and by the aid of the glass the Indians were again discovered watching our motions. We were now about to take a final leave of the "Little Blue," and in filling our water-kegs, to be independent of that want, I caught an immense fresh-water turtle, weighing nearly one hundred weight, which made a furious battle, snapping at those near it, chopping its jaws with a violence that I am sure would fracture a leg or arm. It took more killing, as my countrymen say, than any fish or animal I ever saw; for, even after we cut it open, it used to snap furiously. When boiled up in portions, with a little seasoning, it made a very rich and nutritious soup.

From the proximity of the Indians, we took our loaded rifles to bed with us, everything going smooth to the third watch, when the report of a gun aroused us all. Some Indians, it appeared, got in amongst the animals in the shape of wolves, the bark of which animal they can simulate to perfection, so as to deceive even old trappers, going all fours as fast as in an upright position. They cut four of the mules loose and mounted them, calculating correctly we would not fire for fear of shooting the animals; but the guards got on a pair of horses and gave chase, when they instantly relinquished them and ran off.

Very early next morning we were "a rollin," as the Yankee teamsters say, and got upon a dead level prairie of withering grass; but about mid-day the country became hilly and broken, abounding with antelope, who, contrary to their usual custom, came so close we were enabled to shoot two of them; and as we were engaged in skinning and disembowelling them, three Indians came up from behind a hill, quite unceremoniously, all smiles and bows, as if they were sure of a kind reception; but I had to beckon them away, as the mules became frightened at the fluttering of their buffalo robes and their novel appearance. One of them was a tall, well-proportioned fellow, not ill-looking, carrying an old flint carabine, spliced and cobbled, and so worn down in the barrel, it was, in my mind, a more dangerous weapon to the person holding it than to him at whom it might be presented; the others were dirty, repulsive-looking wretches, with bows and arrows, making gestures as if for something to eat; but being resolved not to give them any encouragement, we denied them a morsel, as they would otherwise accompany us, keeping round our camp, and stealing everything they could lay hands on. We did this as graciously as we could, giving them to understand that, as our journey was away beyond the great mountains, we required all we had for our own use. Shortly after, he carrying the carabine started off at a rapid rate to an eminence nearly a mile in advance, making signs that brought to view about fifty more, as quickly as Roderick Dhu's warriors rose from the heather of Clan Alpine, who, throwing their robes upon the ground, ran off in a lateral direction towards a dip of ground, where they were lost to sight, as I imagined for their arms, to avenge their wounded comrade, and pay us off for our inhospitable treatment; on their reappearance, however, we saw that they were carrying skins, and robes, and one thing and another for trade. They first tried to steal, and were foiled; they then sought to beg, and were disappointed; so, as a last resource, they came to barter.

This tribe (the Pawnees) were once amongst the most numerous and powerful on the whole Indian territory, with an immense extent of country; but in their conflicts with the Camanches on the south, the Sioux on the north and west, and the Delawares and Shawnees on the border, their numbers became seriously thinned, the ancient prestige of their supremacy vanishing at the same time; and as their power and influence decayed, the debasing spirit of theft and treachery grew up amongst them, banishing every trace of that innate nobleness and chivalry which is still to be found in the Indian race, making the terms Pawnee and thief synonymous, and degrading the tribes almost to a level with the Digger, who is considered to be in the lowest scale of the entire Indian family.

As soon as I was satisfied of their intentions I went out to meet them, making signs that they could not come near the waggons, as the animals were restless. Taking the hint, they opened out their wares where they stood, which merely consisted of buffalo robes, dingy and smoky, and some tawned deer-skins. We took all they had of the latter, as they were certain to come in handy in repairing harness, giving them some biscuit in exchange, but declined having anything to do with the buffalo robes, having no desire to add to the members of our company, for they actually seemed alive with vermin. I was in expectation of getting a few pair of mocassins, but they had none save those on their feet. There was one old fellow who had a tolerable good pair, at which I cast some side glances, not so furtive, however, as to escape the notice of the wearer, who, observing that I desired them, made most amusing efforts to impress me with their value and usefulness. He shook his head most disdainfully, pointing at my boots; then walked off some distance in a most stately gait, nodding at his mocassins, as much as to say they would not cripple my action; he then passed one palm over the other, arching his arm, by which I was to understand they would carry me over the mountains; and we finally came to terms for those famous articles for a small piece of tobacco. Several amongst them were deeply scarred and pitted with small-pox; in fact, taking them as a lot, they were as dirty and wretched a sample of humanity as could well be found, my gallantry not even enabling me to hold out for an individual exception amongst the softer sex, several of whom came up in the progress of the traffic, carrying their monkey-looking pappooses* on their shoulders.

Mirage was again announced, taking the form of hills and broken ground, with a wavy indistinct outline, rising and subsiding at times like great banks of vapour. I was of opinion that they possibly might be bluffs along the Platte, which river we expected to make that evening; but my conjecture was no match for the active imaginations of my comrades, who discovered all sorts of preternatural appearances. Meanwhile, as we steadily approached them, the hazy veil disappeared, revealing a range of elevated hills stretching north and south, moundy on the surface, and where they were broken showing a fine light rabbit sand. On their sides were numbers of antelope browsing on the short close herbage, and several animals, exactly like our hare, but of a light grey colour, resembling that of the rabbit.

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* Pappoose means a young child.

There was a natural gap in the hills, through which we drove on to a perfectly level plain of about four miles, that intervened between them and the river, covered with white patches, which did not at first attract my attention particularly, till I observed some of the loose animals stooping and licking them with avidity; I then dismounted, and found they were crystallised incrustations of salt and soda. As we neared the river, the surface was more thickly and continuously coated with those efflorescences, assuming quite the appearance of one unbroken crust. It was high time to stop when we reached the bank of the Platte, but there was not a blade of grass. We proceeded a few miles without any improvement in the prospect, and at last halted close by the river, at the tail of Grand Island, so called from its extending ninety miles, being, I believe, the largest river island in the universe. It was well timbered with large willow and cotton-wood trees; but we had not a stick on the bank except the miserable drift brush which made a most wretched fire. We killed an enormous snake, very handsomely striped, called, I believe, the garter snake; a harmless reptile, and not poisonous, which are very plentiful in this region. The river is very large; wider than the Missouri in its broadest opening, but shoaly and turbid, flowing rapidly over beds of quicksand, which in the eddies form into bars and conical-shaped tumuli, leaving the water at one place not over a few inches, while within a single step it becomes chin-deep; and thus it continues for several hundred miles, incapable, notwithstanding the immense body of water that sweeps through its channel, of navigation for even craft of the smallest burden, while it would, if governed by the ordinary laws of other great rivers, afford a noble thoroughfare into the heart of the continent, and diminish many of the great difficulties of the overland route to the Pacific.

It is a dire but inexorable necessity that compels the poor prairie traveller to pitch his tent every evening in the neighbourhood of water, where, instead of finding rest, he finds the insatiable musquitoes awaiting him, who invariably put forth their entire powers of persecution, when, after the toils and fatigues of the day, his heavy eyelids begin to droop. A "monster meeting" of those infernal insects were arrayed on this occasion, fighting, too, with poisoned javelins; for, no sooner was the wound inflicted, than a hard base, about the breadth of a fourpenny-bit, was formed, swelling considerably, with an irresistible itching, and becoming still more inflamed as we indulged in scratching, till water began to exude, and an ugly ulcer formed. I never before suffered so unbearable an infliction, my forehead getting so sore and knobby, I could not bear my hat. Had I been on a religious pilgrimage, I would certainly have concluded that all my little peccadilloes were fully expiated; but some even suffered more than I did, and others scarcely got a sting; for there are those whose blood they do not relish, while on that of others they banquet like gluttons; and there is no banishing them, for, chase them away as you will, they still return and finish their meal where they began it. We sought temporary relief in the river, our enemies hovering over us, and whetting their daggers all the time. During the bath a most original wager was made betwixt two young fellows, that one should remain exposed without his clothes longer than the other, each acquiescing in the use of cigars; so, after lighting them, down they lay on the bank, contiguous to each other, wincing as a sting was inflicted on a tender quarter, and smoking with a fiercer energy as the pain became more excessive. Both held out manfully for five minutes, when G——y, in the act of giving up the contest, playfully touched the rear of his adversary with the end of his cigar, causing him to jump up in an agony, swearing "he could not stand it any longer, for the father of the flock had stabbed him."

Next day we proceeded up the valley of the Platte, which is perfectly level for some hundreds of miles, with just enough of incline to give the river its current. After travelling briskly for some hours, we did not appear to have advanced a mile, so much is the unpractised eye deceived in surveying those interminable plains. We reached Fort Kearney early in the evening—

if fort it can be called—where the States have stationed a garrison of soldiers, in a string of log-huts, for the protection of the emigrants; and a most unsoldierly-looking lot they were—unshaven, unshorn, with patched uniforms, and lounging gait. Both men and officers were ill off for some necessaries, such as flour and sugar; the privates being more particular in their inquiries after whisky, for which they offered one dollar the half-pint; but we had none to sell even at that tempting price.

We kept close along the river the following day, which was studded over with low sedgy islets, partaking nothing of the picturesque, being quite on a par in that respect with the naked bluffs on the other hand. Towards noon we came to a place which had quite a Golgotha-like appearance, being thickly strewed over with bones and skulls, the results of Indian conflicts, as the valley of the Platte is the great battle-ground of the Sioux and Pawnees, both of which tribes, we were informed (by some dragoons who came thus far with us from the fort in search of missing horses), were busily employed in preparing for an active summer's campaign —an event calculated to cause a stir in the price of vermilion and black paint, in both of which colours the warriors bedaub themselves in a most grotesque manner before marching to the encounter. The dragoons told us we might expect to meet the war party of the Sioux on their way down; a pleasure we would have all very gladly declined, if possible.

Flocks of seagulls, and what we call maybirds, a species of curlew, kept flying about us all day, and I was not a little surprised to find them far away from their element. We had another sublime but terrific conflict of the elements in the evening, not confined to one quarter, but pervading the entire heavens. It commenced by a portentous calm, that caused us all to listen intuitively, as if aware that something awful was approaching; black clouds soon after began rolling up from the edges of the horizon, accompanied with fitful squalls that almost rocked the waggons off their balance, and intermitting torrents that fell in large globules. About eleven o'clock it again became sullenly calm, and the sky obscured with a jet-black curtain, which enveloped us in Cimmerian darkness; but at times a blaze of sheet lightning behind would throw a lurid gleam through, producing the grandest imaginable effect; and then, as if rent in pieces by prolonged peals of thunder, showers of electric fluid poured from the clouds, rendering the most minute objects momentarily visible, and enabling us to see that the majority of our mules had pulled up their pins and stampeded. As soon as the fireworks got on the wane the waterworks commenced in real earnest, keeping up a striking analogy to Vauxhall; but as the loss of the mules would be disastrous in the last degree, we mounted all the saddle-horses which were tied up to the waggon wheels, and commenced a most novel but nervous chase, following up our frighted game by the aid of the lightning, which at times almost blinded us, making our horses shiver and snort, and bewildering the mules, who kept wheeling about, not knowing in what direction to seek escape, we were thus fortunately enabled to get amongst them, and tie their lariats in bunches attached to the horns of our saddles. The storm now settled down into heavy, constant rain, in which we made several ineffectual attempts to retrace our steps, but were finally compelled to dismount, and sit down contentedly on the wet ground, under this shower-bath, until daylight, when the sun soon put all the vapours to flight. It was about five miles from our camp, and by the time we reached it, breakfast being prepared, we did not wait to change our garments, as the exercise and the hot sun had dried them on our backs.

The saline efflorescences were again coated over the plain far and near, and the stock appeared to enjoy the licking of it more than the choicest feeding. From this point the valley began to narrow, and became more interesting, the bluffs getting bolder, and sparsely covered with fine cedar; the vegetation, too, began to improve, rich clover and grasses, commingled with wild vetch, now forming its pod, making up an ollapodrida that must have been wonderfully nutritious. In the course of the day we saw in the midst of the verdure a red arid space covering fifty acres, which was what trappers call a prairie dog village. It was very thickly inhabited, but they treated us inhospitably, withdrawing into their domiciles as we entered the suburbs, They burrow like a rabbit, and at the mouth of each hole have a tumulus, on which they delight to sit and sun themselves. They subsist on herbs, but, not content with the surface supply, they gnaw up the roots, killing all vegetation in the neighbourhood when they shift their quarters into a new territory. They are scarcely so large as a grazier or young rabbit, with a light hairy skin, a head and tail, and a miniature bark like a young pup. Some of our party tried them in broth, and pronounced very favourably of their juicy properties; but I could not conquer an aversion I conceived for them, when, digging for one I shot that fell into its hole, I found that a rattlesnake and a filthy prairie owl were its companions.

Our animals were regularly in clover this evening, the close pasture being ankle deep; but being thirsty, I suppose, from the salt licking, the moment we unharnessed them they ran off in a body to the river, and jumped in, soon sinking in the quicksand, and, in their floundering to extricate themselves, getting entangled in each other's ropes—the stronger plunging over the weaker, until, from utter exhaustion, they could struggle no longer. Several of them had only their heads over the water, and were at a very low ebb; indeed, when we durst venture to their relief, it was a great risk to do so; but, as our all depended on them, the hazard should be undertaken. Six of the party, therefore, went into the midst of them, cutting the ropes right and left; and such was their sagacity, knowing we came to their aid; they never moved until we urged them. The uppermost ones managed to crawl out of their own accord when freed from the meshes; but we had to prop up and assist the others to the bank; and even when they got on firm ground they reeled and staggered from fright and feebleness. It was, unfortunately, necessary in our case to leave the lariats constantly on them, letting them trail when we set them loose, otherwise we would have infinite trouble in catching them, not being adepts at lassooing.

Although we had not a chip of wood this evening, we had a capital substitute in buffalo chip (as their ordure is called), which makes roaring fires, and is the exclusive fire of the Indian tribes who live in their haunts; but as it will only burn when dry, you will see all the squaws employed in carrying it into their wigwams, on the approach of a rainstorm laying in a sufficient store to carry them over to the period when it will be again baked dry by the sun.

We made an early start next morning, and soon came into a district where there was not a blade of grass, a mite of herbage—not in consequence of backward vegetation, but of buffalo appetite, for they cropped it down to the earth. We also found many other unerring proofs of their very recent presence in this quarter, in great quantities of their coating, sometimes in large flakes the size of a sheep's fleece, where they tumbled and wallowed. It was of a soft yet tough nature, such as I am sure would make warm and most enduring cloth or coarse hosiery. I afterwards saw with Mr. Husband, the manager at Fort Laramie, stockings knitted of that material, which were neat and comfortable, and in use without a fray nearly two years. We persevered in the delusive hope of finding grass, and were at length forced to stop at a lagoon, where young reeds were the only feed; but we endeavoured to compensate the animals for their short commons by an extra hour's nooning and a short afternoon's travel.

All morning as we came along we remarked, at a distance from the opposite bank of the river, a dark continuous line, that neither looked like timber nor broken ground; and as we stopped, fancying we observed some motion, I had recourse to the glass, by which I saw distinctly they were vast herds of buffalo, that, by the fresh tracks on our side, must have recently crossed over, after wasting the country around us. The enormous extent on which they stood made a guess at their numbers almost impossible. Two of our party, who were desirous to draw first blood, volunteered to go over, and made the necessary preparations, promising us hump-steaks and many other delicacies for supper, jumping in with great spirit and apparent determination; but they scarcely proceeded one hundred yards when their ardour seemed damped, for they kept looking back at the shore, as if in doubt about the prudence of proceeding, but ashamed to return, until at length a whirling eddy made them shy it altogether, returning amidst taunts and laughter, which originated the first token of angry exasperation that exhibited itself since our start. I had very great difficulty in bringing about an amicable adjustment; however, when their anger began to subside, there was a strife towards reconciliation that was mutually sincere.

CHAPTER VII.

Shaved look of the Prairie—Speckled with Chip—Second Attempt at crossing—Successful, but attended with great Danger—Kill a Buffalo—Estimate of their Numbers—Prairie Wolves; their Sagacity—Narrow Escapes at Recrossing—"Misfortunes never come Single"—Crossing of the Buffalo—Flight of our Animals—Peculiarities of the Buffalo—Lie in wait for a Drove coming over the River—Shoot a Cow—Their Appearance at this Season—A November Robe the best—Gregarious Propensities—Interfere with the Progress of the Mexican Army—Buffalo Break—Meet a small Herd on our Path—Wound one—Account of the Chase—Nervous Affair—Mode of Preserving the Meat—Extraordinary Thickness of the Buffalo Skull—Test it by Rifle Practice—Our Camp—Obliged to Drive our Stock on an Island—Rain saturates the Chip and leaves us without Fire—Grumbling and Dissatisfaction of the Men—Some wish to Return—Persuaded to wait till we reach Fort Laramie—Buffalo Milk—Another Prairie Dog Town—Cheerless Landscape; effects on the Spirits—Sagacity of the Mule—Miss some of our Men, who appear in the Morning greatly knocked up.

SEEING the herbage so cropped, and the ground completely speckled with buffalo chip, I sent three horsemen forward to search for night quarters, and, after following five or six miles, I found one of them waiting at another marshy spot, where, he said, from appearances two miles ahead, he would advise us to wait until the other two men returned; as they intended going the full length, it would be possible we could reach with the waggons. We occupied ourselves, in the mean time, in watching the buffalo through the glass, which, though we had travelled nine miles parallel with them, were one unbroken mass, even as far forward as we could see; the other men soon after returned with bad news, reporting the country, so far as they went (over eight miles), as totally devoid of feed, and still covered with chip. I therefore passed the word to unhitch, and, as our halt was two hours earlier than usual, giving us four hours until sunset, it afforded sufficient time, as I thought, to make another attempt at crossing. I now began to feel a twitch of ambition myself to make my début as a buffalo-hunter, one of the old party and two new recruits avowing their readiness to join in the essay; so we four took soil, stripping off everything but our shirts and shoes, the river being here considerably over a mile and a half wide, and very rapid. We got above our waists immediately near the shore, but, after wading fifteen or twenty yards, it began to shoal until we were not knee deep: the sand was very shifty, and the current rapid, making the footing very insecure and toilsome. A few yards more brought us again into deep water, and thus it kept alternating from an ankle ripple to a chin-deep surge, the water being so muddy we could not discover the difference of depth. We struggled on for half an hour without seeming to have made any palpable approximation to the opposite shore, our boots and shoes getting panged with sand and sharp gravel, crippled us very much, and caused such pain, we resolved on making an effort to get them off; but, as the shortest pause in the quicksand made us sink right down, it was a matter of extreme difficulty, especially with me, who was the only wearer of boots. I managed, however, to get one off, after some staggering; but in attempting to pull off the other I lost my balance, without fully effecting my purpose. The suddenness of the souse, and my endeavours to keep my rifle dry, gave me quite enough to do; and when I got upright, I found my foot stuck in the leg of my boot, yet I durst not stop to get it out, though it impeded my motions dreadfully; at this moment one of my companions got into an eddy, and losing his presence of mind, shouted lustily, letting go his rifle, which he did not recover. As I pressed forward to his assistance, I saw he drifted on to a shoal bar, where he again got to his legs, and was enabled to make a fresh start. After an hour and twenty minutes, wading and floundering, we at length reached *terra firma*, but so completely used up, we had to recruit for a quarter of an hour before we were up to the mark for attack; then, after fresh capping our rifles, we rose to our knees to survey the herd, which, to our great mortification, were much more distant than we imagined, standing on a level plain that did not admit of a covert approach in any direction. We had, however, a favourable wind, and not having much time to manœuvre, we determined on going up in single file.

As we got fairly on our legs, absolute bewilderment got the better of our passion for the slaughter, for, as far as the eye could peer up and down, and inwards towards the bluffs, it was so closely covered with those animals that they had scarce room to feed, thousands of calves sporting before them. I asked my comrades, all highly intelligent men, for an estimate of their numbers, which they set down at 100,000; but I conscientiously believe three times that amount would have been within the mark, for a well-digested guess at the number of square miles they occupied, allowing a reasonable number per acre, gives a result more than justifying my computation.

We moved briskly forward, gaining half the intervening space before they appeared to observe us. An old bull, who stood isolated in the front, was the first to alarm them, when he immediately commenced pawing the ground and bellowing, with several others following his example, until they raised a cloud of dust, under cover of which we advanced at a trot, getting within two hundred yards of the nearest, and simultaneously discharged our three rifles, at the report of which they broke, shaking the earth as they galloped away towards the bluffs. When the dust cleared away we saw one behind, sitting with its fore-legs propping up the body. Reloading leisurely, we gave her time to bleed and become enfeebled, so as to be disabled from attacking us, which a wounded buffalo is certain to do, if capable of moving. As we drew nigh she struggled to her legs, boldly confronting us; but now, being inside fifty yards, I sent a ball into the fatal quarter, above the brisket, which brought her heavily to the ground. As our time was limited, we hastily cut out the tongue, and, without attempting to strip off the hide, cut off a few hump-steaks, for we could not carry a heavy load over the river.

The sun had nearly run its course as we began retracing our steps; nor had we gone far, when we saw a pack of prairie wolves in high repast on the carcase we had just left, for instinct teaches those animals to prowl about the flanks of large herds, whose sickly, aged, and wounded members fall to their lot in more than sufficient numbers to sustain them. It was nearly dusk ere we regained the bank of the river, and I felt half-disposed, even naked as we were, to remain on that side till morning, the more particularly as the river was higher than when we crossed—caused, as I subsequently learned, by the thaws near its source in the Rocky Mountains, which, alternating with the frost at night, causes a regular rise and fall each day. Second thoughts, however, made me resolve on the attempt, as the nipping evening air began to exercise its influence on our naked persons. We now fairly stripped, hanging our bundles on the end of our rifles; and I, being the tallest, went in advance, having arranged that we should wade one after another, within reach, so that we might render each other assistance in case of accident. It was nearly dark when I slid down the bank, and had not proceeded more than ten steps when I was swept off my feet, and compelled to strike out with one hand. I soon, however, got footing again, and called to the rest to try it higher up, where they got no deeper than their hips. Our progress was very slow, it being nervous work crossing such a river in the night; and one of our companions got so frightened, our difficulties were sadly enhanced. I made him throw away the meat which he undertook to carry (being unencumbered with a gun, which he lost in the previous crossing), and endeavoured to cheer him and keep up his courage, for he was fast sinking from fear and exhaustion. Shortly afterwards he uttered a shrill scream, as he got whirled round in an eddy, where I heard him plashing quite close to me, but could not see him; however, I made a plunge in that direction, and caught him by the leg, drawing him towards me, until I got him upright in my arms, when he convulsively clasped me in his, and locked his legs round me, so as to completely impede my motion. I thought for a moment our fate was inevitable; but it flashed on me that submersion was the only alternative to disengage him, so I threw myself forward, clasping his wrist. As I anticipated, the shock liberated me, and I arose, pulling him, more dead than alive, until one of the others came to my assistance, who grasped the other arm. Thus we struggled fully an hour towards a fire which our companions providentially lit as a beacon; and when we reached the shore there was not an individual of the four able to clamber up the bank without assistance. It was some time ere we could be well assured of S——n's recovery; however, warm blankets and hot brandy-punch eventually restored him, and the remembrance of his escape cured him of his passion for buffalo hunting.

We were doomed this evening to experience an exemplification of the proverb, "Misfortunes never come single," for in the middle of the night a horde of the buffalo crossed close to our camp, looing and bellowing, making the ground tremble as if under the paroxysm of an earthquake, and causing all our animals, without a single exception, to stampede. Every man, save six who were indispensable for guarding the waggons, had to turn out on foot in pursuit. Fortunately the night was clear, and though we could not overtake them, we could see the course they took up a ravine leading to the other side of the bluffs. It was dawning day when we reached the top, and though we could not see them, the fresh ordure gave us an idea of the direction they went, towards another range of hills, from which we saw them about five miles off, on the prairie. They did not attempt running further as we approached and secured the bell-mare, who had all her faithful mules around her; but nine of the horses were still wanting, so six of us mounted bare-backed, with nothing but the lariats; and after scouring the plains for two long hours, we found them all quietly grazing on a dip of land, where they waited quietly till we caught them; but by the time we all got back the day was so advanced we did not think of moving.

There was no necessity for again fording the river in pursuit of buffalo, there being droves both above and below us on our own side, and numbers in the act of crossing, giving us a good prospect of sport and fresh food. Those to leeward of us did not remain long contiguous, crossing over the bluffs in enormous batches, for it is an extraordinary peculiarity of the buffalo, that it will run from the scent of a white man much sooner than from his person, while they are indifferent to that of the Indian, though he is more frequently in collision with them; and their sense of smelling is so very acute, a pale-face has not a chance of getting near them, unless he goes right up the wind. We observed a large drove to windward, about midway over the river, and as the reeds along the banks were three feet high, concealment was conparatively easily; so I took with me three of our best marksmen and stole into ambush, taking a position where we supposed they should pass within one hundred yards of us; but in their passage they inclined so much down with the stream, it looked as if they would trample right over us; and as we were hesitating what we should do, a huge, ferocious-looking bull who headed the drove, ascended the bank within thirty yards of us, the rest following in a line, which they generally do when moving of their own accord, without apprehension. The string being long, we waited patiently till a fine cow (now in better season than the other sex) was passing, when two fired, and she fell without a struggle.

The shape and appearance of the buffalo is in nowise symmetrical or sightly at any season, but they now looked particularly ungainly, their coats being for the most part cast along their sides and quarters, their necks and heads alone retaining their shaggy covering, most inappositely like a pet French poodle. In this month (May) they generally shed, and judges say that a November robe is the best, as the new fleece, having six months to grow, becomes in that period sufficiently thick and warm, with all that softness conducive to comfort, whereas those that attain a full winter's growth become coarse, bristly, and matted. I read many accounts, and heard divers and sundry stories of the buffalo, and of their marvellous gregarious propensities, but I always swallowed such yarns "cum grano salis," allowing what I conceived a liberal margin for the exercise of the long-bow which travellers generally use, as poets do their license. However, experience has now satisfied me that in those instances, at least, reality transcends imagination. I can thus profess my faith in previous writers, and reconcile my scepticism to the statement, that in the progress of the army of invasion over the Mexican plains, they were frequently obliged to fire grape-shot amongst them to open a way; for I should mention, that when once a herd of buffalo break (as it is termed), running off in the mass, they are not to be turned aside by common obstacles, but go right ahead, regardless of everything before them, fearing only the cause in their rear that originated their flight. They have been frequently known to burst right through the line of a caravan, trampling the mules to death, and the waggons to pieces, the men escaping with difficulty.

We had not travelled many miles, after apportioning the cow, until we saw a small herd directly in our path, when we halted, and two of our men crept up to shoot at them. There was a gorge in the bluffs opposite where they were feeding, through which I knew they would rush in retreat when fired on, and there I posted myself on horseback with a light carabine that I could manage with one hand. I was not deceived, for they made direct for the open when they broke, but my horse became so fretful and fidgety, I could not take aim as they passed. I gave chase, however, and soon got up to and alongside the headmost, down whose shoulder I saw a stream of blood, the effect of a wound. He cast his eyes fiercely round occasionally as I came over-close to him, showing a disposition to attack, so that it required both my hands in the bridle to prevent my horse from bolting. I persevered, nevertheless, running a neck-and-neck race, leaping over rocks and bursting through copses of thick brush, until we came to a dry gully that crossed our path, over twelve feet deep, and as many yards wide, and as in mid-career it was impossible to stop short, down we leaped, landing amidst those brutes, who, jostling each other in the descent, were tumbled at the bottom. It was a fearful moment, and I thought it all up with me, as my horse came to his chest by the shock; but, ere he was on his legs, I was again alone with my bleeding companion, who was scrambling up the other bank; I, however, gained the level first, and before he could get into active motion, fired, but, not being over six yards from him, he made an instant rush, and gored my very poor horse in the shoulder, coming against him with such force as to throw him clean over, unseating me with extreme violence, and falling himself to his knees in the exertion. The horse jumped quickly up and ran away at full speed, with my foot sticking in the stirrup, and the wounded bull in pursuit; a sudden jerk at length caused the boot to pull off, the bull with his impetus overrunning me, and in attempting to stop falling heavily, and lying unable to rise from loss of blood and exhaustion, while I lay at a little distance incapable of moving, from the stunning effects of my accident. Seeing my horse gallop back without its rider, several of the men hurried up the ravine, and found me just recovering from a faint. After washing off the blood and giving me a drink, they proceeded to despatch the buffalo, who had not yet yielded up the ghost, for, as they discharged their pistols at him, he made several desperate efforts to rise, glaring fiercely at them, and uttering a low bellowing roar, not so much of pain, I should say, as madness. He was a very large beast, and loaded the saddle-horses well in bringing him piecemeal to the waggons.

Having now two beeves—much more than we could consume until the flesh would become tainted—I thought it advisable to remain where we were, and preserve the meat. This is managed on the prairie by cutting it into strips and drying it over a fire on a kiln, constructed of poles and wattles, when it will keep sweet for a length of time. The Indians manage it by the heat of the sun, but we called in the aid of artificial fire to ensure despatch. All meat is the better of being kept over some days before use, but I never before met any that tendered so quickly as the buffalo; whether from its feeding or rambling habits of life I cannot say. We had some steaks on the coals in less than two hours after the slaughter, yet it eat as short and tender as if kept in a meat-safe for a week under the auspices of the most professed epicure. We feasted like aldermen on boiled tongue, hump-steak, and marrow-bones, and during the evening had some target practice at the head of the bull (which I often heard was impenetrable to a rifle-bullet), commencing at three hundred yards, and reducing the distance to one hundred, at which short range it was perfectly ball-proof. It is not the great thickness of the *os frontis* alone that offers the resistance; the shaggy mass of hair and wool with which the head is covered first arrests the ball, particularly the rifle-ball, which, in its spiral motion, twists it into wad and deadens the concussion against the bone.

My horse bled profusely, and suffered cruelly from the musquitoes, who gathered on the long wound in multitudes. He was unfit for use afterwards till we reached Fort Laramie, and I experienced myself great pain and uneasiness from the dreadful bumping I got as he dragged me along.

We were early on the road next morning, the travelling easy, but the grass, as the Yankee barbers say, "was shaved behind the skin." The bluffs gradually inclining to the river, and diminishing the width of the plain, we did not stop to noon, pushing ahead till our avant courier returned with the disagreeable intelligence that there was no feed ahead for ten miles; we then immediately diverged for the margin of the river, where alone there was a particle to be met; but opposite our camp there was a low island, about five hundred yards from the shore, that, from its green appearance, tempted me, notwithstanding my former essay at Platte fording, to visit it. In this I succeeded pretty easy, not being encumbered with anything whatsoever, finding, to my great gratification, abundance of grass that escaped the over-ravenous maw of the buffalo. I shouted back the glad tidings, desiring them to send over the animals, who, for the first time, evinced a hesitation to follow the bell-mare. It was dark before the last was got over, the rain falling in torrents, and not a stick or atom to light a fire, the buffalo chip being rendered unfit for ignition too; so we had to sit down wet and weary, to a cheerless supper of raw bacon and hard ship bread.

This was the first time I saw the spirit of any of our party beginning to flag, and as we sat shivering to our comfortless meal, three of them openly expressed their desire to return home. I sought to joke them out of their whim, but it was no use. They demanded a waggon, with their proportion of the animals and provision; which, as I told them, I had no power to give, it being a matter for the consideration of the company, who were unanimous in their refusal, as it would weaken our strength, and expose them to certain peril, in returning through the Pawnee nation after what had occurred. This latter argument had some weight with the dissentients, who I endeavoured to comfort with the assurance that, when we reached Laramie, I would do what I could to have their wishes complied with, as they might probably hit there upon a caravan going with skins and furs to the States.

If we had a bad supper, we had a treat for breakfast next morning in some rich buffalo-milk, one of the last watch having shot a cow whose udder was full of milk, which he took from her before she cooled; he also got the calf, but it was poor and weakly; I should suppose from the constant roaming. We passed through several dog villages in the course of the day, one of which, by its vast extent, I set down as the metropolis of the canine nation, and shot a good many, several of the party preferring them even to buffalo beef. The ravages of those little animals gave the plains a sterile look, which, together with the naked aspect of the sandy river, now completely devoid of timber, and dotted with low sedgy islets, presented a most cheerless and desolate landscape, that was not without its depressing effects on the spirits and feelings. We kept travelling later than usual, cherishing the hope of finding grass, but evening came without our meeting any. The mules—nor was it to be wondered at—showed signs of uneasiness, and commenced braying unanimously, as if in remonstrance against any further advance. Subsequently I frequently tried, and noticed both at noon and evening, as the customary hour passed, an occasional bray was given to jog our memory, and give us to understand it was time to stop.

We had an accumulation of annoyances this evening, for when we came to camp there were three of our men missing, and the rain came down in such a deluge, no one felt disposed to go out and look for them. Their absence would not have caused me so much uneasiness, only that, having the river to guide them, I thought it next to impossible they could have gone astray, which suggested the idea of their having fallen in with the war party of the Sioux, to whom the guns would have been a great prize. I was so haunted with this apprehension I could not sleep, and about midnight I sallied forth with a bugle, which I kept sounding, after a fashion, without any other effect than that of bringing about me a pack of night-walking wolves. At daybreak there was still no tidings, so I ordered twelve men to make ready, and return to where they were last seen, then to divide into parties of four, and make a strict search. Each horseman packed two days' provisions, as they were not to return the first night if unsuccessful, nor were the waggons to move though the feed was so bad. But as everything was in readiness, and some of the men actually in their saddle, some dark objects were seen in the distance, who we joyfully recognised through the glass to be our missing friends, and in order to expedite their arrival, I sent off three men, with led horses, to meet them. They said they wounded an antelope, which they followed up a great distance; and in their anxiety to bring some of the flesh to camp, overloaded themselves, and were caught by night before they could gain the river, which they vainly endeavoured to grope out in the dark, and at length lay down on the bare ground, under the heavy rain. They were very much fatigued, two of them complaining of sore throat and headache.

CHAPTER VIII.

Beds for the Invalids—Mode of decoying Antelope—Try it, and Succeed—Sleetstorm—Soft State of the Ground—Cannot find a Dry Spot to Camp on—A Lot of Mules get badly Mired—Continuance of the Storm—Dread lest the River should rise—The Indian Dreader alarmed again—Visit of a large Party of Sioux Indians—Handsome Caparisons—Reason of our Friend's Precipitate Return—Description of the Sioux—Their Costume—Mode of betokening Friendship—Exhibit our Trading Wares—Interchange of Presents—They leave, promising to meet us at the Ford in the Morning—Do not meet their War Party—Mode of Indian Burial—Find the Ford too deep for Crossing—Try it, but are forced to desist—Washing on the Plains—Sioux come again in a handsome Cavalcade—Beauty and Fascinations of the Sioux Women—Sioux Cleverness at Trading—Visit their Village by Invitation—Description of their Town and Wigwams—Juvenile Archery—Get a Cure for my Horse—Give an Acknowledgment of our kind Reception—Take our reluctant Leave—False Character given of the Sioux—River Falls—Wound an Indian by Mistake—Great Breadth of the Platte—The task of Crossing—Consolation in a Hailstorm—Try our New Buffalo Horse—Description of the Indian style of hunting that Animal—Nervous Passage over a very Narrow Ridge—Dangerous Descent and Accident—Lovely Basin at the Bottom—Whirlwind—Enormous sized Hailstones—"Ash Hollow," "North Platte."

I GOT beds made for the invalids in the waggons, and made a start in a biting north-east wind, that called for all the muffling we could muster. Our road lay through sandhills, which made the pulling very severe. About ten o'clock, like the shifting of a scene, the cold and gloom moved off, and the piercing air was supplanted by a scorching sun. We frequently before experienced sudden transitions, but this was by much the quickest, reminding me of Æsop's "Contest betwixt the Wind and the Sun" in its effect on our change of garments. Such variable weather might be supposed to be conducive to bad health, but, with the exception of the broken-down antelope-hunters, there were none of our party ailing.

We saw a very large herd of antelope a good way off, at the base of the bluffs, who kept such a sharp look-out there was no getting close to them; but having heard, from a superannuated trapper at Independence, that by affixing a bright-coloured rag to a pole, and sticking it in the ground near you, it would be certain to attract them within pistol-range, if the person in ambush could thoroughly conceal himself, I took this opportunity of testing the efficacy of the stratagem. Getting a capital hiding-place in a dry gully, in the bank of which I stuck up a gaudy-coloured kerchief, they soon saw the novel object fluttering in the breeze, when they all gathered into a bunch, confronting it, gazing at it with elevated heads, like a flock of sheep when a strange dog crosses their pasture, and approximating at intervals, until they came within fifty yards of it, stamping the ground with their fore-feet, as it waved to and fro, as if they were angrily puzzled to make it out. I was so amused, peeping at them, I did not fire until they came almost within "blow" of me, and I then shot two, the ball going slick through one and killing another as well. The result of this experiment made me attach greater credence for the future to the stories of old trappers, which I previously regarded as the gossiping yarns of whimsical dotards. I was told in the States that the flesh of the antelope was, as the Yankees termed it, "mean stuff;" but I cannot coincide in this verdict, for the steak we had this evening was as well-flavoured and juicy as any I could desire. In the afternoon we saw several scattered herds of buffalo grazing amidst the sandhills; but, as we had an abundant supply of fresh provisions, we did not molest them.

Firewood was now our most urgent want, for there was not as much timber on our line of march as would make a toothpick, the interminable Platte winding along the bare plains like a monstrous serpent, without grass, flowers, or any object to relieve the plodding tedium of our way. The chip was not dry enough for culinary purposes, but the staves of a small rice cask which we found out afforded sufficient fuel to dress our evening's meal. Next morning was ushered in with a storm of rain and hail, drifted by a strong cold wind, its "pitiless pelting" driving the animals before it with their tails tucked in betwixt their legs; and though they went at a sneaking pace they were a long way off before breakfast was over. There was no great difficulty in overtaking them, but the job was to make them face it; for no sooner would we have them headed towards the camp than a violent squall would make them round their sterns to it again, so that it took us four hours to get them back half that number of miles.

From all appearances it had set in for a constant wet day, the gushing torrents making me uneasy lest the river should rise and prevent our crossing. The travel was so deep, the wheels were working half the time up to the naves, the poor mules sinking at every step above the fetlocks, so that humanity forbade our persevering beyond a half day's drive. The country was so very flat, the surface water gave it the appearance of a lake, rendering it difficult to get enough of high land to answer for camping on. As soon as the animals were set free they cantered off to a greenish patch that looked like grass, but which was only a thin coating over a slough, in which eleven of them got mired so badly, the probability of relieving them looked very questionable indeed. After trying several expedients without success, we got each of them bound round with strong ropes, attaching a swingle-tree to a long chain that reached the firm ground, and then harnessed a team of eight mules, by which means we hauled them out one by one, five of them getting badly lacerated by the ropes and tyings. The worst of it was, all our hard jobs occurred in heavy rain and storm, debarring us of the comforts of a fire for warmth or cooking. When they were over this evening the men suffered so much I served out, for the first time, small rations of brandy in lieu of coffee.

There was not a moment's intermission all night, nor a sign of abatement in the morning. Some of the men went to the river to look for drift brush, but did not get a particle; our breakfast, therefore, consisted of raw beef or bacon, hard bread, and water,—rather meagre fare, taken into consideration with our other hardships and privations. We now appeared rather to be travelling by water than over land, so completely was the low level ground submerged by the rain, which made me, at all hazards, determine to try and reach the ford of the Platte that evening, for if the storm happened to be general—which it appeared to be—the river might get so swollen as to detain us for a week. In order to put the animals in heart, I gave each a large basin of thick gruel made of corn meal, which they licked up with great relish, and paid for in improved exertions. After a few hours' travel the plains began to rise and the clouds to break, leaving us by noon once more dry land and a comfortable sun. I then sent a small party ahead to inspect and report on the state of the ford, which I knew could not be far away, our Indian dreader amongst them, who since the late "affair assumed a valour if he had it not," deriding the bare idea of Indian prowess when opposed to that of a white man. But rather sooner than I expected the desired intelligence I descried a horseman returning in hot haste, who I soon perceived was our friend, bareheaded, with a pistol in each hand, the bridle-reins broken and hanging down. Thus the horse, being under no restraint, galloped into the midst of the loose animals, who, wondering what was the matter, commenced braying, kicking, prancing, and wheeling about him, getting up a most ludicrous scene, in which our friend appeared to be enacting the classic part of "fool in the middle." Before I could ascertain the cause of his sudden retreat, I saw the remainder of the party returning, surrounded by a cavalcade of about five hundred Sioux Indians, accompanied with a number of young squaws, all superbly mounted, and their horses caparisoned in a curious but highly ornamental style, the head-stalls, rosettes, and nosebands of the bridles fringed with a light trimming of red cloth, and the saddle-cloths, which extended over the quarters and down the sides of their fine-spirited animals, elaborately worked with particoloured beads, and bunchy variegated tassels dangling at the corners. This fully accounted for our friend's precipitate return, who, when he took breath and got hold of the reins, with a badly simulated composure stated he hurried back to be the first to announce the finding of the ford; but, like Dr. O'Toole when questioned about the keys, he feigned to be altogether oblivious of the circumstance of having the pistols in his hands; an exhibition rather unusual in the proclamation of pleasing intelligence.

I never, either in civilised or savage life, saw a finer or nobler looking race of men than the Sioux, who now favoured us with a visit, all of them of great stature, stalwart, muscular proportions, and agile to a degree, with highly intelligent countenances, strikingly handsome features, and a complexion very little deeper than a dark olive. They were well armed with various weapons—guns, pistols, tomahawks, bows and arrows—their clean, glossy, and ample buffalo robes hanging about them with all the effect of a Roman toga. The women were extremely beautiful, with finely-chiselled features, dark lustrous eyes, raven locks, and pearly teeth, which they disclosed in gracious smiles, that lit up their lovely faces with a most bewitching radiance. They wore no head-dress, their luxuriant tresses, divided with the most scrupulous accuracy, flowing in unconfined freedom over their shoulders. Their attire consisted of a tanned buckskin bodice, not over tight, fitting after the Nora Creena fashion, to which was appended a short full skirt of the same material that did not quite reach the knees. The legs were concealed by close leathern hose, that revealed the most exquisite symmetry, embroidered on the sides with beads, meeting above the taper ankles a laced mocassin, worked up the instep in the same manner; and over all was thrown, with a most graceful negligence, a light blanket of snowy whiteness, so arranged as to form a hood in an instant. They also wore large ear-drops, and had the fingers up to the joints covered with rings.

As the men approached they dismounted, proffering their hands, with good-humour beaming in their countenances. The women did not offer any salutation; but at a signal from the chief—a man of herculean proportions, of the real Paddy Cary family, "with brawny shoulders five feet square"—they, too, dismounted, and after tethering their horses, squatted in a semicircle at a little distance from the men. The chief, then, with a great air of ceremony, commenced charging a large pipe—the calumet of peace—which he passed amongst his subjects, each taking a whiff, and giving his chest a thump as he concluded. It was then handed to us to do likewise, being, I understand, the most reliable token of friendliness they can give. As soon as this ordeal was concluded, we gave them to know we were disposed to trade in blankets, tobacco, and ornaments, and of which we had a large stock, for horses robes and mocassins; an intimation that set them all a chattering briskly, during which we unfolded our wares with the assiduity of practised pedlars, exhibiting them to the inspection of the ladies, who seemed highly pleased with them, as we pointed out their different excellences, holding up our paste baubles in the sun's rays, and showing them the reflection of their sweet countenances in little pocket mirrors, as an inducement to deal; and further propitiating their good opinion by making them a few small presents of beads and rings. There was one dear girl amongst the group I was fairly smitten with, to whom I presented a small looking-glass, taking leave to kiss the tips of her delicate fingers as she graciously accepted it; at which she smiled, as if understanding this silent but expressive mode of admiration, and taking off a ring, caught hold of my hand to put it on— an operation I playfully protracted by cramping my fingers, that I might prolong the pleasure of contact with so charming a creature. The men now made signs they would meet us at the ford in the morning with the articles they had for exchange, and then giving the signal to mount, sprung into their saddles, and galloped off to their village with the squaws in advance.

Before leaving us, they inquired if we met their war party, appearing greatly astonished and disappointed as we answered in the negative; and now that I had proofs of the kindliness and amicable disposition of their brethren, I regretted it much, as it is a spectacle of surpassing interest and novelty; thus described by Mr. Bryant, who was fortunate enough to have witnessed one: "I had not travelled this morning far, when I met the war party of the Sioux Indians, who had just broken up their camp, and started on an expedition against the Crows. Their first design was to conduct their women and children to a secure point on the Platte, where they intended to leave them in care of the old men till they returned. In marching, they seemed to be divided into numerous parties, at the head of each of which was a beautiful young female, gorgeously decorated, mounted on a fat prancing Indian horse, and bearing in her hand a delicate pole or staff, about ten feet long, from the point of which was suspended, in some instances, a gilt ball and a variety of brass trinkets, with brilliant feathers and natural flowers of various colours. The chiefs, dressed in their richest costumes, followed immediately in the rear of the female ensign-bearer, with their bows and arrows in their hands; next succeeding them were the women and children and pack animals belonging to the party; and in the rear of all, the warriors; the whole as I met them, party after party, was a most interesting display of savage pageantry. The female standard-bearers appeared to be more fascinating and beautiful than any objects connected with savage life which I had ever read of or conceived; it appeared as if this was a solemn occasion, for not one of those composing the long column, some three or four miles in length, as I passed them, seemed to recognise any object or utter any sound; they marched at a slow pace, in perfect silence, with their eyes gazing steadfastly on vacancy in front. I bowed many times, but they took no notice of my salutations. Doubtless their stern deportment was expressive of their determination not to look to the right or left until they had penetrated into the country, and wreaked their vengeance on their enemies, the Snakes and Crows." Very soon after our visitors departed we came to a stop in a slope, on which there was some better pasture, about four miles short of the ford, as the mules do not like going into the water in a cold collar, and within that distance they would have their blood sufficiently warmed.

There were a few straggling trees along the river edge, in one of which there was a large round object that looked like a bird's-nest, but as eagles do not build in trees, and the dimensions of the object was too large for such a nest, I went down with a few others, and found a large circular bundle, the size of a washing-tub, wrapped up in matting, and tied with strips of tough bark. We could not make out or conjecture the meaning of this strange package till next day, when I was informed by a Sioux it was the body of a renowned warrior, interred in mid-air, lest the wolves should scoop it up and devour it—a practice generally adopted towards those who have distinguished themselves either as warriors or wise men in the second degree.

The sun and we rose simultaneously, his smiles setting us all asmiling as we good-humouredly pressed forward to encounter the current of the turbid Platte; but our gladsome gaiety was soon converted into growling, and "curses, not loud but deep," at finding its waters several feet above the usual level, and its flood proportionately increased in rapidity. I felt myself rather out of sorts with the first fine travelling day we had had for a week, and resolved in an attempt before abandoning it; so, selecting the tallest mule of the lot, I got on him without a saddle. Having divested myself of the major part of my clothing, the old boy, who was called Sacramento, from having figured in that battle, although a veteran campaigner, and equally at home on land or in water, evinced a great deal of reluctance in this instance about wetting his hide, discovering, I believe, in his sagacity, the impracticability of the attempt. However, I over-persuaded him, and very soon solved the question of fording, for within three lengths of the shore he was swept off his legs, and we were carried down a couple of hundred yards before we could regain it. There was nothing now for it but a little philosophy, vulgarly called patience; so, taking advantage of the pause, we commenced a general lavabo, to get rid of a large arrear of used-up garments, on which we rung the changes more than once, merely subjecting them to the elementary process of washing, by hanging them round the waggon tops, exposed to the influences of the rain and sun. On that occasion, however, we went somewhat more artistically to work with soap and knuckles, some of the wayfaring dandies being guilty of the excusable plagiary, if I can call it so, of mangling, after the manner it is related the Bedouin Arab cooks his steak, by placing it between his posterior and the saddle, and setting his horse to full speed.

While hard at work, up to elbows in suds, our Sioux friends with a large accession of their tribe, made their appearance, coming over the rise driving a lot of mules and horses before them, and accompanied by a multitude of dogs, drawing packs on long poles.* They were, if possible, more carefully attired than on yesterday, and greeted us with the frankness and bonhomie of old acquaintances. The riding animals were all picketed apart, and, those for trade, as well as the robes and mocassins, placed within a space, surrounded by a ring of squatters. Before the traffic commenced, all those who received presents the day before stood forward to make theirs in return, which they did, especially the maidens, with a degree of simple, easy dignity and grace that was perfectly fascinating; and as the "nut-brown maid," the charming recipient of my looking-glass, presented me with a richly-embroidered pair of mocassins, and proceeded to fasten a handsome bracelet of beads upon my wrist, I never remember to have been so rapturously impressed with the influences and fascinations of lovely woman, making me forgive the river, even should it detain us for a week—a month—I had almost written, for ever. This over, the pipe was again lit and passed; a compliment we reciprocated by distributing a déjeûné of raw bacon and biscuit, which seemed to gratify them exceedingly. The traffic then commenced with great activity, and, unsophisticated though the Siouxs are by nature and habit, they displayed a quickness of discernment, and adroitness of dealing, that would have done credit to a Cheapside apprentice. They saw at a glance where your choice lay, and regulated their estimate accordingly; while in selecting the articles they desiderated, they affected a depreciative indifference, as if there was nothing in the batch that exactly suited them. The fair closed with our having got three tip-top mules, a trained buffalo-horse, some fine robes, and a pile of mocassins, for three muskets, six pairs of blankets, with a proportion of powder, lead, tobacco, and paint.

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* The vehicle is formed by attaching two poles to a breast-strap and passing them through the loops of a backband, letting the ends trail on the ground; binders are then stretched and secured behind the animal, and two upright sticks affixed, which prevent the load from slipping back. Large-sized ones are constructed of lodge poles (with which their houses are erected), and drawn by mules, by which two modes they transport all their effects when they change their villages, either for the convenience of fresh pasture, or to get into the neighbourhood of game.

We were then invited over to their village, five miles distant; an invitation we could not refuse without having it construed into an affront. I therefore took with me ten of our party, riding alongside my Dulcinea on her prancing palfrey, and as we went capering and curveting over the prairie, I flatter myself we formed an equestrian cortége that neither Ducrow nor Batty ever equalled—one that would monopolise admiration even in the classic regions of Rotten-row. About midway between our camp and the village there was a large wigwam, the same as those they live in, standing isolated on the plain, in which the remains of their late chief were laid in state; it was entirely closed up, and guarded vigilantly, to prevent its being disturbed until decomposition would completely denude the bones. We found the village standing on about twenty acres of land—a perfect circle—in the centre of which stood the residence of the present chief, surmounted with a flag made up of all colours in the rainbow. His lady was at home, but his three sons were along with the war party. Their wigwams are of a perfectly conical shape, about eighteen feet high, and twelve in diameter at the bottom. The skeleton of this primitive habitation is formed by a number of straight light spars, called lodge poles, tied closely together at the top, and spread out at the base so as to form a cone; they are then covered with tanned buffalo robes laced together, with a small aperture at the apex to let out the smoke, and a doorway at the side, which is closed by a flap looped up above it; the fire stands in the centre of the floor, and the mats and couches are ranged close along the sides. They are very superior to the general run of Indian habitations, and make a very comfortable dwelling, capable of being erected or taken down in a very short time.

We partook of some jerked beef in the chief's residence, and afterwards had a display of juvenile archery from the pappooses, or young children, who hit their marks with amazing precision. This was followed by a native dance by the young men and women, who chanted their own music, which was not of the most spirit-moving character; nor was the ballet a display of a very attractive nature—as, indeed, it could not well be—for dancing in a circle, with clasped hands, did not admit of much grace or variety of motion. There seemed to be at least some half-dozen dogs to each wigwam, some of them fine-sized, powerful brutes, and the plains around for miles were covered with horses, mules, mares, and foals. I got a salve for my poor horse's shoulder from the chief, that soon healed it up, which, from its highly sanative properties, would be a great acquisition to the veterinary pharmacopœia, but I could not find out more than that it was composed of certain herbs and buffalo-marrow. Before leaving, the chief asked, and got from me, a written acknowledgment that he was a "good Indian," and "treated us kindly," which he would show to the commandant at Fort Kearney, to propitiate his good opinion. He then escorted us to the entrance of the village, and formally took leave, making us signs he would send some of his subjects in the morning to assist at the crossing. I turned more than once on the plain to gaze on the dwelling-place of the lovely Sioux girl; and, as the village sunk from sight beyond an undulation of the prairie, I felt a saddened soul swelling, in which the moistened eye sympathised, and thought of the plaintive couplet:

Maid of Athens, ere we part,
Give, oh! give me back my heart.

I was told at the fort the Sioux were not to be trusted; that they were treacherous, thieving, and only contented when dabbling in human gore; yet I found their disposition the diametrically opposite to this wholesale misrepresentation, and resolved for the future to harbour a different opinion of Indian character—at least where I found the females beautiful—for I think it will hold good, as a general rule, to expect more benignity of nature where the race is within the influence of the loveliness and gentleness of woman.

I was highly gratified to find on my return to camp that the river had fallen considerably, and that we might look for a steady decline from the continuance of fine weather. Those who remained in camp had not been idle in our absence, having propped up the waggon-beds fourteen inches on the axles; arranged the loading, by placing the powder and breadstuffs on the top; and having dug away the bank, made the descent easy and gradual, so that nothing remained but harness and dash in in the morning. An unpleasant accident took place in the night by the coming of the Indians the chief promised, who were not expected until morning; but long before the dawn they were seen advancing to the camp by one of the watch who remained behind, and was unaware of the arrangement. He at once challenged, and a second time, without receiving an answer, when he fired, sending the ball betwixt the left arm and the side of one of the Indians; fortunately without doing any injury—scarcely even drawing blood, as there was only a slight abrasion of the skin on both arm and side. The Indians walked coolly on as if nothing had occurred, and seemed to understand and cordially receive the explanation given them.

After an early and hurried breakfast two of the

Indians went into the river, and betwixt swimming and wading got over, after nearly an hour's struggle, the river being close upon two miles wide. When they reached the banks opposite, they took their stations at the point where alone we could get out; and one of those that remained mounted to point out the best track through the current. We then put five span of picked mules to my waggon, with a rider on the near leader and wheel ones, riding myself below the team, to prevent them from swerving with the stream. In this order we went in, but, notwithstanding the digging away of the bank, the waggon made a dive that nearly drove the tongue mules under water; and, only there was a good man in the saddle, who upheld them with a powerful arm, the consequences might have been highly disastrous, as the waggon was broadside to the current. It occasionally swayed with portentous violence, almost floating when it got into deep water; and again, as it reached a shoal, the flood rushed through the spokes with a truly nervous noise. The mules in like manner were alternately aswim and walking, the length of our team constituting our greatest safety; for when the wheel mules would be out of their depth, the lead and middle ones might not be over knee-deep, and *vice versâ*, so that there were always some on the strain to keep the waggon in motion, otherwise it would sink in the quicksand, and all would be lost. The danger, against which it was impossible to take any precaution, was that of overturning, as the wheels on one side got on the steep sides of the countless hills and bars of sand formed by the different eddies. Twice it was fairly poised, and I held my breath in an ecstasy of fear, thinking an upset inevitable, which would not only involve the loss of the waggon and its contents, but that of the mules, and very probably the riders, tangled in the harness as they necessarily should be. After fifty minutes' hard tugging the leaders reached land, and while climbing the bank exhibited symptoms of great exhaustion, as their sides sobbed with distress; but the nature of the bottom forbade a respite, so, dashing my riding-horse past them, as a mode of encouragement, all joining in a teamster's chorus, they charged the obstacle, and brought up their load right merrily, for over half-way, when overtasked nature, unable to sustain the impulse, let the motion diminish ominously until the wheels could be scarce seen to move; an instant's pause, and back it should inevitably go. At this critical moment the lead mules just gained the level ground, and in the next the victory was barely won, as up came the waggon, amidst our hoarse cheers; but our exultation was checked by the recollection that there were still four others to get over. Before they started, however, I got the bank on the coming out side graduated to an easy slope, which, together with lightening the loads, by packing all the tall horses and mules, enabled them to effect it with comparative ease, the only accident that occurred being the falling of a pack-horse, who lost his pack, and nearly smothered the man who was leading him.

As I before remarked, all our tasks either commenced or ended in rain; which, in this instance, before we could pitch our tents, came down as if the flood-gates of heaven were swept off their hinges, and not a spark of fire to cheer or warm us. We had, however, this countervailing consolation to make us amends, that one of the greatest difficulties of the trip was vanquished in the passage of the Platte; there was, besides, plenty of first-rate feed for the game animals, who earned it well.

The 20th brought forth a sun, but of a cold, silvery complexion, little calculated to make the amende for the negligence of yesterday. With a toilsome day's work before us—having to cross the neck of land that separates the south from the north fork of Platte, the route lying over high hills and low valleys, that looked like lakes from the late rains—two of the Indians asked permission to accompany us "two suns' travel," a request they could not be graciously denied, after the kind manner in which we were treated by their tribe. Not very long after starting we saw a small herd of buffalo to windward of us, and, being desirous to test the merits of the Buffalo horse we got in trade, I made known to one of the Indians that I wished him to pursue them and shoot one. Spreading out the arms before him that he might take his choice of weapons, he selected two holster-pistols, which he stuck in his girdle, and, throwing aside his robe, caught the little horse, and, making a sort of noose bridle of the lariat, jumped upon him bare-backed. The game creature knew perfectly well what was in the wind, as, pricking forward his ears, he voluntarily darted off towards the herd, while we stopped on a hill-side looking on at the sport. It so happened the herd did not break until he was tolerably close to them, and, curiously enough, they then headed back in the direction from which he came. He was soon laid alongside a big bull, who, as he drew closer upon him, pistol in hand, made a quick lunge, which was as quickly evaded by the horse, without any admonition from the rider, immediately resuming his proximate position of his own accord. After galloping a few strides more, the Indian leant over, and stretching his arm to the full length, fired; a momentary shock followed the report, after which the wounded brute darted from the herd at his enemy; but the watchful horse, as quick as thought, wheeled right round, galloping away from his pursuer, with what jockies call a stirrup eye cast back to watch his movements, regulating his speed so accurately as not more than safely to outstrip him. The bleeding buffalo continued the chase a quarter of a mile, and then stopped, pawing the earth in an agony of pain and fury; the horse was stock-still at the same moment, as if gifted with volition, and became again the pursuer, as the buffalo turned to rejoin the herd. In less than a minute he was once more side by side with the sinking bull, dodging his thrusts with the skill of a fencing-master, until another shot brought the contest to a close, the buffalo dropping to his knees and falling slowly over on his side as the life-ebbing tide issued from his chest. The Indian immediately dismounted to cut his throat; and, while engaged in this operation, the horse stood quietly over the prostrate carcase, like a greyhound after having run down a hare. The instinct of those animals is truly surprising. They leave your hands free for the use of your weapons, requiring no guidance from the reins, for they intuitively hit upon the beast you select, watch their opportunities of approximating, and, anticipating his attack by the rolling of the eye, never fail in evading them. We subsequently killed all our buffalo from the back of this horse, who was also pleasant to ride, and steady as a pack animal.

About half-way between the forks we got upon the summit of the hills that divide them, where driving became rather a nerve-testing operation, the only practicable path being along a ridge, with a declivity, amounting to a precipice, on each side, and so narrow it did not admit of a man's walking alongside to lay hold of the leaders in case of need; but this very circumstance, I believe, contributed to our safety, as the sagacity of the mule convinced him there was no alternative but to go on cautiously. Not a voice was heard for a couple of miles, every mind being occupied with the sensations of impending danger; for in some places the trail was so edge-like, even some of the horsemen alit, under the influence of giddiness. As we advanced the ridge gradually rounded, leading to such a long and abrupt descent, that we debated the propriety of detaching the bodies of the waggons from the wheels and sliding them down; but as the driver of the lead one volunteered to essay a trial with rough double-locking and holding back with ropes, we tried the experiment, taking out all but the wheel-spans, which were left in merely to guide, and succeeded admirably until the last, in the descent of which the frayed rope parted, and the waggon slid, or, more properly speaking, fell, on top of the mules, upsetting and killing the one on the off-side and breaking the collar-bone of the teamster, who was otherwise badly bruised; the bows were all smashed, and the contents sent hopping down the steep. The waggon miraculously escaped any disabling fracture, enabling us to reload it and proceed without much delay. Two more moderate descents brought us into a lovely wooded dell, so watered and sheltered that vegetation of every description appeared as if stimulated by a hot-house compared with that on the open prairie. The modest wild rose, forgetting its coyness in the leafy arbours, opened out its velvet bosom, adding its fragrant bouquet to that of the various scented flowers and shrubs which form the underwood of the majestic ash, that confer a name upon the spot, producing a perfectly aromatic atmosphere. Cool streams, filtered through the adjoining hills, prattled about, until they merged their murmurs in a translucent pond, reposing in the centre of a verdant meadow, a perfect parterre, whose bespangled carpet looked the congenial area for the toys and gambols of the light-tripping beings of fairy-land.

While contemplating the beauties of this favoured place, one of the Indians ran up, shouting unintelligible jargon at the top of his voice, and gesticulating with frantic vehemence. Hostile Indians first suggested themselves as the cause of the alarm; then a wild drove of hemmed-in buffalo; but the practised eye of the Sioux detected a gathering whirlwind, peculiar to those regions, and eagerly pointing to the south-west, where a small black cloud, that did not look bigger than a cannon-ball, came rushing and expanding through the sky with preternatural velocity. He made hasty signs to unhitch the mules, and bring them, with ourselves, to shelter in a thick brush, apart from any lofty timber; but before they were all disengaged the roar of the maddened elements burst upon us with appalling violence, projecting hail and irregular blocks of ice, of unprecedented magnitude, that plumped through the exposed waggon-covers as if they were wet paper, and made the animals wince and jump as they hopped upon their backs and quarters. Several huge trees were uprooted near where we first halted, and limbs and branches whirled aloft like so many wisps. It swept past us in a very few minutes, taking the course of the ridge from which we so lately descended; and had it overtaken us there, it would have put an end to the expedition, for men, animals, and waggons, would have been inevitably hurled from the heights. As we crept from our shelter, we found the ground covered with detached masses of ice, some of which measured six, some nine inches in circumference, many glittering with prismatic hues, which, on being broken, had blades of grass in their hearts, that were carried into the air by the whirlwind, and congealed in their frozen prisons. I am satisfied that many of those pieces were sufficiently heavy to cause death if they hit a person on a slightly-covered head. Our waggons presented a most tattered appearance, and left us a busy evening's patchwork. We now emerged from the narrow gorge of "Ash Hollow," upon the banks of North Platte, which is the same muddy, uninteresting stream. It is below the forks, and renewed our acquaintance with roaring fires.

CHAPTER IX.

Drifting Sand—Court-House Rock—Uninteresting Scenery—More Rain—Its disagreeable Effect—Chimney Rock—Its Appearance—Fast decaying—Symptoms of Gold in the Ravines—Continued Rain—Damages our Provisions—Stopped by the Mud—Brandy Rations—Mount Ararat—Scenery improves—Indian Introduction—Air our Loading—Shoot Antelope—French Trapper—Fascinations of that Mode of Existence—Anticipations about Fort Laramie—The Fort itself—Obliging Governor—Trading at the Fort—Distance from Independence, and Time occupied in Travelling—Future Facilities—Determine on Packing—Dissuasions of the Governor unavailing—Crow Indians; their very bad Character—Faith in Indian Chivalry—Vote of Thanks—Troubles of Packing—Renewed Contests with the Mules—Their Antics—Difficulty of cording Packs—Pack turns; Conduct of the Mules thereon—Our first night's Bivouac as Packers—Black Hills; expansive View—Worrying Mishap and Delay—Moonlight Travel—Thoughts about the Crows—Long Day's Journey—Fatigue, Disappointment, Delight, and Apprehension—Unwelcome Sounds—Deliberation—The Appearance of the Country—Crickets and Ants—Our Precautions preparative to rest.

OUR next day's journey was through loose drifting sands, that reached from the river edge to the bluffs, not presenting a single feature worthy of note or comment either in vegetable or animal life, with the exception of a huge isolated rock, about six miles from the river, called by the trappers "Court-House Rock," from its supposed resemblance to a large public building of that description; but there was nothing about it of that striking character to seduce me from my path so far aside to visit it. From Court-House Rock the aspect of the country began to improve a little; a slight, threadbare vegetation covering the surface, and keeping down the light sands, which before gave us considerable annoyance; a few stunted cedars, too, helped to relieve the dreary sameness of the scenery. We got tolerable camping-ground, and caught some nice fish in a small rivulet, which, unlike most of the affluents of the Platte, was clear, cool, and fresh.

The following morning was most promising; and, continuing so up to our nooning, we spread out all our clothes and provisions to get the benefit of the sun, which, with its usual caprice in those quarters, retired behind a dark curtain, to make way for a teem of rain that poured down so copiously it ran in surface streamlets over the plains. I may literally say we came to anchor this evening in a sheet of water, the prairie, as far as we could see, presenting the same aqueous aspect. We were drenched with rain, and shivering from the cold raw wind, the measure of our grievances being filled up by a supper of raw meat and hard bread. We endeavoured to secure dry lodging by digging deep trenches round our tents, which had a temporary effect in draining the space on which they stood; but as there was not enough of fall to carry off the water, they filled up soon after we went to sleep, and when we awoke in the morning there was fully four inches of water around us on our robes. There was no abatement in the rain, and I felt sorely ill at ease as I saw the pitiable plight of the poor animals, standing with drooping heads, their tails turned to the storm, unable to lie down from the water, which likewise covered their food. It was impossible to remain where we were, and likewise impossible to meet worse quarters; so, breaking fast with a second edition of last night's supper, we set out in the teeth of a penetrating wind, and under a drenching rain, to look for a patch of dry ground, be it ever so bare or barren, preceded by a scout, who we hoped would soon return with an olive branch to comfort us.

There was now observable through the mist high up in the clouds a pointed object, that looked like the top of some monumental erection, becoming more and more distinctly defined as we proceeded. With its base still enveloped in fog, we camped parallel with it on a slightly elevated patch that lay close along the river edge, where the water could not lodge, and the animals had some little picking; but I was grieved to find the breasts and shoulders of several of them scalded and stripping from the constant wet; however, we had enough amongst the rest of the troop to let those go free until the soreness abated. It was early in the day when we stopped, shaking in our dripping garments, without anything to employ the interval until evening, or a spark of fire to heat our numbed limbs. Under these circumstances it was proposed that a party should go to the bluffs, about four miles distant, to try and pick up as many sticks of cedar as would cook us a warm supper—a proposition very generally approved of. We headed towards this tapering rock, called by roamers on the prairie "Chimney Rock," though, to my eye, there is not a single lineament in its outline to warrant the christening. The Wellington Testimonial, in the Phœnix Park, elevated on a Danish Fort, would give a much more correct idea of its configuration, though not of its proportions. It is, I should say, five hundred feet high, composed of soft red sandstone, standing out from the adjoining cliffs, not so much like the result of a violent spasm of nature, as if from the wearing and wasting effects of the watery storms that prevail in those forlorn regions. It appears to be fast chipping and crumbling away, and I have no doubt that, ere half a century elapses, "Troja fuit" will apply to the Chimney Rock. After surveying it on every side, and adorning its base with some hieroglyphics, we went about gathering our firewood; and while ransacking the ravines I was quite astonished to find considerable deposits of that fine black sand which most generally indicates the presence of gold. I felt very anxious to dig a handkerchief full of earth, and wash it; but fearing, if my conjectures turned out correct, it should originate a diversity of opinion that might lead to a break-up of the party, I kept my surmise a secret. I should not be surprised, however, to hear at no very distant day that gold had been discovered along the valley of the North Platte.

We all got good back loads of dry cedar, which by the time we got to camp produced quite a calorific effect on the system without the process of ignition; three cheers saluting us as we cast them on the ground, for the idea of a jorum of hot coffee set us all in high glee, and, to use a homely phrase, "it would have done your heart good" to have seen the style in which we tucked it in. The cold rain continued all night; and to our great mortification, when we arose from our wet beds in the morning, anticipating the luxury of a warm breakfast, it turned out there was not a splinter of wood left, the guards having indiscreetly burned it all during the night. This was very vexatious and provoking, the bluffs being too remote to think of going there again for fir-wood; but during the grumbling a shout of triumph issued from one of the waggons, in consequence of finding two large cheeses, the thin boxes around which, and an emaciated cotton shirt, enabled us to concoct a lukewarm beverage, equally devoid of colour and taste—hot coffee par excellence. The continued wet and damp not only saturated our wearing apparel and bedclothes, but began seriously to affect the best-protected packages. The soft sugar began, as the trade say, to "form foot," dripping through the bottom of the waggons; even the refined article becoming moist and crumbling; the flour got mouldy, the powder lumpy, and no means or appliances of amending or arresting the evil.

Before starting, we helped all the animals to a basin each of thick gruel, which they stood sadly in need of, and then commenced our plashing march through the water, not making more than a mile an hour; nor had we proceeded at this snail's pace over a few miles, when our leading waggon got stuck fast and deep in a slough, the mules being so jibbed and cowed they could not be got to pull an ounce; while every moment's pause caused the whole train to settle down so in the soft earth, that it almost looked as if we were destined to remain fixed in the mud until the waters subsided. We tried the task of extrication by selecting ten of the evenest pulling mules, making fast the fifth chains of the other waggons to the point of the tongue, so as to lead to firm footing; and after a tugging strain that partly opened the coupling rings, we got it out of the mire—an operation we had to repeat with the others; but as a precaution against the recurrence of such mishaps, two horsemen took it in turns to ride ahead to pick out the hardest ground for the future.

The rain now changed into sleet that completely benumbed us, depriving the drivers of all feeling in their fingers to hold the reins. We did not make over nine miles, and had not even the consolation of hitting on dry camping-ground; so that the men became wofully depressed, some of them looking as if labouring under the premonitory symptoms of ague; as a preventive to which I again served out brandy rations, there being no chance of a hot supper. Those not on guard huddled themselves into the waggons to try and generate animal heat by close contact; but with all our endeavours it was about the most trieste and dreary night I ever spent in my life.

A thick heavy fog hung over us in the morning for awhile, and then rolled away, revealing to us the face of our long-lost friend, the sun, who quickly dispelled the vapours of mind as well, and caused us to forget the chills and ills of the last few days, the cleared atmosphere enabling us to see ahead a dry rolling prairie, which gave rise to the profane cry, "Mount Ararat—Mount Ararat at last!" As we got on the elevated ground, we could see that the bluffs took a curve like the tail of a shepherd's crook, a prominent eminence forming the curl at the end. This is called "Scott's Bluff," from the body of an enterprising trapper of that name being found upon it. It is supposed he lost his way, and having crawled up on it for a look-out, died of starvation. The sides of the bluffs were no longer smooth and sloping, but bold and rugged, belted with abrupt ledges of sandstone, and split by craggy ravines, well wooded with large cedar. As we advanced into the bend of the crook, over a fine rich grassy lea, the scene became heightened in beauty and interest, until, close under one of those fantastic cliffs, we found a rustic log-hut, the *country residence* of a Mr. Rouberdean, of St. Louis, a blacksmith by trade, who, foreseeing an active business from the overland emigration, settled himself in this sequestered nook, getting into sharp collision with the long dormant echoes of the neighbourhood, and taking unto himself a Sioux spouse, a perfect queen of the wilderness, whom I beg leave to introduce as the sister of the Indians who accompanied us from South Platte.

We arrived at an hour that afforded us ample time to spread out and dry our food, raiment, &c.; but it smacked of desecration to see the enchanting spot, sacred to the spirit of solitude, strewed over with our blue-moulded duds, and the tender flowerets, that would grace a Paradise, crushed beneath flour-bags and flitches of bacon. The distance hence to Fort Laramie was fifty-five miles, over a rolling country, covered with good pasture, but not calling for any especial notice. We met the Platte at several points, covered as usual with tufty islets, and shot two antelopes, that sufficed us till we arrived there. As we were rolling along the second day we saw a man running across the plain to meet us, who we first thought was an Indian, but as he came up proved to be a French trapper, clad in a buckskin suit, with a fine rifle on his shoulder. He spoke tolerable English, expressing his surprise that we could have managed to get thus far so early as the 26th of May. He informed us he was the son of an old French trapper, from the Hudson Bay settlement, brought out by his father when quite a boy; and that, after his death, he continued the same mode of life, having married the daughter of an Indian chief, in whose society he forgot every feeling or desire to visit the crowded thoroughfares of the world, procuring, as he said, the main staples of existence with his gun, and obtaining the few superfluities he desires at the fort, in exchange for the skins of the game he kills. "It is no less singular than true," that most men who frequent the hunting-ground of the Indian, either as trappers or tourists, contract a singular liking for their habits of life; and innumerable instances are on record where men of independent fortune have forsaken the conventionalities of polished society for the simple, unsophisticated association of those children of nature, demonstrating the inherent tendency of man to the natural in preference to the artificial, wherever freewill is left a loose rein.

I gave a *carte-blanche* to my imagination as we drew nigh Fort Laramie, in view of the Black Hills (as they are called) at its back, seeing in "my mind's eye" a bold fortress, perched, in stern solitary grandeur, on a beetling crag, with corbled battlements bristling with cannon, encircled by chasms, through which mountain torrents roared vengeance on any of unbidden approach; but, "like the baseless fabric of a vision," my glowing fancy vanished before the wretched reality—a miserable, cracked, dilapidated, adobe, quadrangular enclosure, with a wall about twelve feet high, three sides of which were shedded down as stores and workshops, the fourth, or front, having a two-story erection, with a projecting balcony, for hurling projectiles or hot water on the foe, propped all around on the outside with beams of timber, which an enemy had only to kick away and down would come the whole structure. It stands, or rather leans, upon a naked plain by the side of a rapid little river, in which a Frenchman named Laramie was drowned, yielding up his name both to the river and the fort. It is not a military station, but belongs to the "American Fur Trading Company," who keep there a supply of trumpery merchandise, to exchange with the Indian and trapper for such skins as they can procure. On its early establishment the beaver abounded in all the rivers of this region; but now the trade is exclusively confined to buffalo robes. It may, however, turn out a point of some importance if the overland route to California and Oregon commands a preference, though, in my opinion, there are other localities much more eligible as depôts for the accommodation of emigrants and travellers.

I found Mr. Husband, the manager, or governor as he is styled, a most obliging, intelligent, and communicative person. He offered us apartments to sleep in; but we did not deem it prudent to make a change in our living in that respect, lest it should afterwards affect our health; we, however, made use of the forge to tighten our wheel-tyres, and make other small repairs connected with the waggon and harness. There were some Indians of the Sioux tribe about the fort trading while we were there, the trading colloquy between whom and Mr. Husband was most amusing, each praising their own and depreciating the value of the other's ware; rattling away with great volubility, "suiting the action to the word." It requires great patience to carry on this system of dealing, the smallest bargain consuming as much time as the largest transaction; and it matters not how well soever the article may suit the Indian, or how much he may desire to secure it, he will never give way to precipitancy, yielding up his final acquiescence with an affectation of reluctance.

There is, besides the governor, a superintendent and ten men employed in stowing and packing robes and skins, who were all greatly in need of clothing of one sort or another, and tempted us to give them a small supply from our wardrobes in exchange for some picked robes, that were infinitely superior to those we had. We also gave them a supply of sugar, coffee, tobacco, and flour, as they were completely out of those necessaries, and did not expect a supply for a couple of months.

It occupied us forty-three days reaching Fort Laramie, our stopping days inclusive, leaving an average for travelling days of eighteen miles per day, the distance being seven hundred miles from Independence. This, though tedious, was not so very slow, considering the sort of vehicles we travelled in, the loads we carried, and the nature of the roads and obstructions we had to deal with; but at a future day, when the track is more beaten, and the bad places bridged over and smoothed, it can be accomplished in a much shorter time, the more particularly as a lighter vehicle can then be used, and as traders, no doubt, will keep large stocks of supplies at the different points—caravans—instead of encumbering themselves with stores and necessaries for the entire trip, need only carry as much as will be necessary from post to post.

Since our favourable experience of Indian disposition from the Siouxs, the project was frequently discussed amongst us of picking out a small party, to go on, by means of pack-mules, from Laramie to California, to have a location selected for the company by the time they got up, and such preliminary preparations as would enable them to go to work without delay. The smallness of the party was no longer considered a difficulty, and it only remained to agree upon the number, and of whom it was to be made up. Eight at length was decided on as the strength, to be drawn by ballot from those who desired to exchange the tedious conveniences of waggon transit for the fatiguing and self-denying mode of travelling by pack-mules. In virtue of my captaincy I was accorded a free choice, and became an *ex-officio* packman. Out of the other seven chosen there were some well suited for the change, but others whose habits and physical conformation rendered them wholly unfit for the undertaking. However, there remained no method of rectifying the matter without creating jealousy and bad feeling. It was arranged we were to have a saddle-horse and pack-mule each, much preliminary trouble being avoided by obtaining full-rigged pack-saddles at the fort; but when we came to mention the matter to Mr. Husband, offering the waggons, which should be necessarily abandoned, in exchange for the pack-saddles, he discouraged the project as one of very great danger, and earnestly remonstrated, telling me that the Crows (Indians), through whose country we should pass for at least three hundred miles, were a fierce, cruel, and powerful tribe, whose vigilance we could not hope to elude, and that, even if our lives were saved (which he did not expect), we would assuredly be stripped of our clothes, provisions, arms, and animals, which would be tantamount to taking our lives: for a man might as well be thrown overboard in the ocean as abandoned in such a condition on the prairie, illustrating his reasoning with many stories of the barbarous treatment that trappers who fell into their hands from time to time experienced. It was evident he made a deep impression on some of the elect; but for my part, entertaining an impregnable faith in Indian chivalry since my acquaintance with the Sioux, I had made up my mind to run the risk of being plucked by the Crows if only one more was to join me. In consequence of Mr. Husband's opinions the subject was again discussed, and four of the chosen men seceded, leaving, to my great delight, three of the *élite* of the party to face the danger.

This being determined on, there was nothing to prevent the waggons from proceeding, while the making, weighing, and adjusting of the packs would necessarily detain us at least another day. Before starting, however, there was a full muster of the original company, and a vote of thanks passed to me "for the judicious and careful manner I conducted the expedition to Laramie," with other complimentary addenda I feel too modest to set forth. We retained nothing but absolute indispensables, forwarding the major part of our clothing by the waggons; our bread was wholly hard bread, which saved us the carrying of an oven, and we exchanged our bacon for jerked buffalo-beef, of which they had a good supply at the fort; we did not take a tent, as it would be an unhandy article to pack, and despatch being our object, we were content to put up with some privations, in order that, with light-loaded animals, we might get to our destination in good time. Mr. Husband got from an old trapper in his employ, who spent all his life in the region, a way-bill or table of route, as well as he could describe it, to Fort Bridger, giving distances and landmarks, by which we could be able to distinguish the places he thought best suited for camping. I took a copy for my own guidance, and Mr. L——s, who was promoted to be captain of the waggon-train, vice Kelly packed off, took another, starting at noon on May the 29th, to a camping-ground eleven miles from the fort.

We, the packers, were now busily employed making pack-sacks of a uniform size, and stowing and adjusting them, so that they should be of precisely equal weight, as the slightest preponderance would, from the perpetual jolting, sway them over despite of the tightest strapping. By evening this branch of preparation was concluded, and our pack-saddles rigged, with cruppers, britchings, lash-ropes, and apichments. Next morning, we caught the mules intended for packing, and with the aid and instruction of an experienced hand at the fort, commenced by far the most bothersome and temper-testing job we encountered yet; for as soon as the mules saw the pack-saddles they began shifting round and back again, so that we could not place them on their backs; and when we shortened their tyings to keep them still, they set to plunging and kicking, as if firmly bent on resistance; even two of them, that were hitherto remarkable for their extreme docility, being amongst the most violent of the rebels. By putting touches on their ears, however—not having a nigger to seize them in his teeth—we got on the pack-saddles, which (as is always the case, and constitutes the chief repugnance of the mule to the pack) were girthed to such a degree, that you would almost think the indentation would cut through the skin, the mules humping their backs and swelling out their bellies to see and burst the ligatures; in which two of them succeeded, one, a roan mule, repeating it no less than five times. As soon as we succeeded in getting them all secured, we turned them loose upon the plain before putting on their packs, to let them do their worst; and, certainly, such a display of fantastic tricks and capers, such ground and lofty tumbling, I never saw either off or on the stage before; they buck, jumped, kicked, and ventriloquised, then rolled on the ground, and the roan, failing in freeing himself by those means, turned round his head and actually tore the accoutrements off his back like a dog. The others gave in after a long bout; but the roan was so totally incorrigible we were obliged to take him for a riding animal, transferring his pack to the Buffalo horse; and even to this mitigated compromise it was very difficult to reconcile him at first, such was his abhorrence to the girth.

We now got on our packs, taking lessons in the complicated art of tying them, which, permit me to assure you, requires a long head to remember and a strong hand to execute, such is the variety and eccentricity of hitchings and twistings according to the Mexican mode, in which nation the science of packing animals ranks amongst the learned professions. There was another exhibition of capers when the packs were put on, but of a subdued character and short duration; so that we were in our saddles, each man leading a mule, by two o'clock, intending to proceed to where our waggons camped the previous evening; and, taking kind leave of Mr. Husband, who reiterated his lectures and admonitions respecting the Crows, we commenced our journey anew.

I had not used my horse since the accident till now, so he was in fine plight from the rest, his wound being perfectly healed by the salve I got from the Sioux chief. All things considered, we made a smooth start, moving on slowly but propitiously for two miles or so, when, going down a hill, one of the packs worked so far forward the mule became restive, and putting down his head, kicked it over his shoulder, the saddle turning under his belly, and causing him to rear and kick until he liberated himself from all the straps and tyings, which were snapped and broken in divers places. This made a halt inevitable, and by the time everything was stitched, cobbled, and set to rights, it was too late to proceed. During supper large drops of rain forewarned us to look to our packs, for, having no tents, our robes and blankets were the only means we had of protecting them, it being preferable to go without sleep, and submit to a good ducking, rather than have our biscuits transmuted into lumps of dough, and our other provisions and ammunition damaged. It was a cold, trying night, and I very much question, if the waggons were at hand, but there would have been other seceders from our limited ranks.

Soon after daylight we hauled the pack-animals close up to a cedar stump, and girthed the saddles, leaving them to accommodate themselves to them while we eat our breakfast. This over, we got on the packs, and after a multiplicity of offers, like children playing finger-cradle, we came upon the right tie at last, moving off under what we considered favourable auspices, and soon gaining an elevated ridge of prairie, where a new and truly sublime scene unfolded itself. The fort—which, like many other objects, living as well as inanimate, looks best at a distance—had quite an imposing appearance, reposing on the broad plain behind, by the side of its sinuous namesake; Laramie's peak to the south-west, rearing its cedar-clad sides and pointed crest into the clear blue heavens, standing amidst the black hills like a towering cathedral in a giant city; while, to the north-west, the distant rocky mountains and the snow-clad summits of the Wind river range mingled with the clouds, giving a scope to the view that tried the nerves of vision. The country was rolling and verdant in the extreme, though the hills, as viewed at a distance, had a sombre cast, from the deep green tint of the foliage that covered their sides. We were going along in great glee in this magnificent solitude, congratulating ourselves on the virtues of perseverance in having overcome the troubles and annoyances of packing, and although not yet adepts, looking forward at no short time to be perfect masters of the art, when the quietest of the mules, as if in derision of our assurance, began, without any apparent cause whatever, jumping up all fours and kicking, till she bursted all the girths and straps, canting the pack and saddle to the ground, with such violence that it broke clean off in the middle of the tree.

I felt confoundedly annoyed, and let my temper effervesce in a variety of anathemas against the whole mulish progeny. It seemed to be a contest who should be the last to offer a suggestion, but there were no two ways about it; we required four pack-animals, and without another pack-saddle we could not budge. I therefore turned right about and galloped back to the fort, nine miles off, to procure one, getting over the ground at such a rate that I was back, and had the party again moving precisely two hours from the time of the accident. We took our dinners on our saddles, and got a refreshing quaff of good water, where we could see by the fire-rakings, our waggon friends had spent the night before last; we also filled our canteens and let the animals fill themselves, resolved upon travelling as long as we had light.

It was a delightful ride, ascending and descending grassy hills, and winding through sweet avenues, shaded with cedars of enormous growth, and fragrant with the delicious odours of scented shrubs and blossoming bushes. Towards dusk we came into a broken ravine, where winter floods are wont to revel; and, hoping to reach good grass and water at the other end, were enticed to proceed, from bend to bend, until the moon, now at the full, lit up our path with her chaste silvery radiance. In passing through one of its narrow gorges we were startled unexpectedly by the noise of sticks snapping under the tread, and as we listened, every man silently, but instinctively, loosened his rifle from the loop, anticipating a surprise, but no Indian made his appearance. I believe, in reality, the sounds arose from the startling of deer, or some other animals, at our untimely intrusion. We emerged on an extensive plain, where, however, I found on alighting, the herbage so short I thought it better to proceed, as it could not prove worse. Conversation was suspended during the residue of our march, for as we rode by the side of our cold shadows on the trackless plain, far far away from aid or succour, the admonitions of Mr. Husband obtruded themselves upon our minds, and wrapped us in a contemplative reserve, until at the bottom of a slope, on the south-west, the beams of the moon now appeared to be reflected from a sheet of water, which, though some distance at right angles with our path, we resolved to camp at, lest in our moonlight rambling we should lose our reckoning.

Next day at dawn we resumed our march, the route being over high rounded hills of light calcareous soil, without any timber, till noon, when they became bolder and broken, and intersected with streams. We travelled a few hours by the banks of one brisk rivulet not laid down by name in my way-bill, where we were sorely tempted to wait an hour, it was so thickly inhabited with fish. Deer were very plentiful about, and buffalo, too, were frequently seen in very small herds of twos and fours, on which we could have easily stolen, from the nature of the country; but being now with pack-mules, we could not hamper ourselves with an atom beyond our positive requirements. Calculating we would continue to meet streams throughout the day, we held on our course; imagining, too, that it was just possible we might overhaul the waggons before night. The hills became steeper and more thickly timbered as we advanced, pine being largely interspersed with the cedar; but we got seat-sore, and our horses jibby, without any prospect of water; and having come, according to our estimate, full forty miles, I was unwilling to trespass more upon the animals; but the day had been so hot, and the evening so close and sultry, there was no doing without it.

We all alighted, leading our horses; the mules having become reconciled to their new employment followed without leading, poking into every split or crevice, until we became so jaded, three out of the four voted for a halt; but the other gentleman, being better bottomed and more sanguine, left us his horse and went on by himself round an angle of timber in quest of a pool or brook. He was absent some time, and we were indulging in a wayside snooze, with the stock browsing around us, when I thought a whistle struck upon my tympanum. I listened a little, and the shrill notes were repeated; so I aroused my companions, who toddled on, seeing our friend, as we rounded the clump, sitting by the edge of a pool of water. This cheered up our flagging spirits, and we hastened forward to cool our cracking palates; the horses, too, espying the precious banquet that glistened before them, trod upon our heels in their anxiety to reach it, while the unmannerly mules did not wait for their masters, but scampered off to have the first of the feast. A sad mortification, however, awaited us, for the water was a stagnant mineral pool, emitting a fœtid stench, too strong even for our seasoned nerves, or those of the animals, who did nothing more than smell to it.

We were greatly out of sorts at the disappointment, our chagrin being increased by the way in which our friend seemed to enjoy it; but as he saw we got sulky and querulous, he pulled his canteen from behind him, and stopped our mouths effectually with a draught of most delicious water, pointing to some green willows at the base of the hill, where there was a bubbling well of crystal water, of which we drank so liberally, although aware it was improper, that we lost all relish for supper. It was laughable to see the mules (who could only get in one at a time between two rocks) nipping the posteriors of him in possession, until retaliation became stronger than thirst. There was a little drawback to our gratification, though, in the number of fresh mocassin prints about the place, clearly not over a day old, which prevented my firing at a buck that passed quite close to us, lest the report should bring some unbidden guests to supper. We were also content to forego the pleasure of a fire on the same account, making our evening's repast on jerked beef and biscuit.

Next morning we got upon a magnificent alluvial bottom, stretching north and south some miles, with a broad belt of heavy timber winding through it, from which, as we approached, we heard the sounds of running water—a lovely stream, fifty feet wide, coursing covertly within its shade. From this we began to ascend a high wooded ridge for better than two miles, from the top of which we saw a thin column of smoke issuing through the trees below, exactly in the direction of our trail. As this could only proceed from an Indian encampment, we diverged in a southerly course, under the influence of the axiom, "prudence is the better part of valour;" nor had we any obstacles to contend with, as there was no brush whatever, and the sod was as smooth as the close-mowed beds of a pleasure-ground. As we descended into the bosom of the vale, about on a parallel with the place from which the smoke issued, we could distinctly hear at intervals the swell of voices, succeeded a moment after by a wild, prolonged whoop, which, of course, we set down as the result of their having descried us, through some of the long vistas in the timber. Now came the time for testing the disposition of the Crows, as I imagined; and while I strove to satisfy myself they were a chivalrous tribe, misrepresented like the Sioux, I could not, by any process of assurance, gain over my nerves from a prejudice in favour of Mr. Husband's opinions. However, we proceeded as if nothing occurred, everything in readiness, with a positive injunction that no one should attempt to fire until the evil intentions of the Indians were made clearly manifest. The question was asked, "Were they to drive off the animals, how should we act?" The answer—"Fire by all means," as, without them, we might as well be on a barren rock in the ocean.

Hearing no further sounds, we made sure they were closing upon us stealthily; still we could not discover any sign of their approach. We were now ascending the opposite rise, midway up which the timber ceased, and were at first undecided whether we should emerge from it or not, as we would then be without any screen; but the Fabian policy not suiting our book, we went steadily ahead, and passed over the crown of the ridge without any interruption, which led us to think the shout originated from some other cause, and that we were still unobserved—a conjecture I believe to be correct, for we neither saw nor heard any symptoms of further Indians during the day.

The country was broken and exceedingly undulating, sparely covered with timber in the vicinity of streams, in which, curious enough, not a bird of any description was to be seen; nor had the notes of a feathered warbler saluted our ears since we left Larimie, though we passed through groves and dells, where one would think they would delight to dwell. However, their paucity was counterbalanced by the swarms of crickets and large ants, that continued to increase as we penetrated the black hills, until the surface became completely covered with them, so that you could not avoid killing several at every step. They kept up a purring sort of noise, and emitted a very disagreeable effluvia, and also annoyed our animals exceedingly, for some of them that could fly would come bang against a mule's or horse's nose, and make him wheel suddenly round, to the danger of his rider, or disarrangement of his pack. I got a blow from one myself under the eye, which drew blood slightly, and caused a swelling and great discolouration of the skin. Every hollow we passed through was watered with a nice stream of cool clear water, affording good picking along their banks. We travelled to an advanced hour, expecting to see the waggons in corral from every hill we ascended; but we had to halt for the night without any other society than ants and crickets. We tried various modes of banishing those disagreeable visitors, and had recourse as a last expedient to firing a patch of grass on a small knoll, where we purposed resting our wearied limbs; but the last curl of smoke had no sooner passed away than they again invaded the wasted territory, leaving us without any alternative but to lie down in the crowd with handkerchiefs over our faces, least any of them should jump down our throats by mistake in the dark. I also tied the legs of my pantaloons at the bottoms, to prevent their playing leapfrog on my shins or elsewhere, but remained a long time sleepless, as I felt them climbing up the sides of my cheeks and warming their toes, round where the breath exhaled through the silk.

CHAPTER X.

Large dry River-bed—Notice nailed to a Tree—Forced Marches of the Waggons—Buffalo Break—Long Day's Journey—No Sign of Waggons—Bad Policy of forcing Travel on such a Journey—Indians about—Report of a Gun at Daybreak—Our Waggon Friends at length—The Ferry of the Platte—Mormon Encampment—The Crossing—Lamentable Accident—Incommunicativeness of the Mormons—Fearful Mule-track above the River—Description of the Passage—The Sand Tick Nuisance—"*Travelling* makes us acquainted with Strange Bedfellows"—Artemesia—"Long Threatening comes at last"—The Crow Indians—We treat them with Confidence—They treat us with Treachery—The Scuffle—Our Good Fortune—Annihilation of our Packing Fixtures—Ruse to Escape their Vengeance—Midnight Travel—Come up to the Waggon Camp—New Arrangement—Volcanic Debris—Bitter Water—Distant View of the Wind River Range—Sal Eratus Lakes—"The Sweetwater"—Independence Rock—Misnomer of the River—Wonderful Canon—Our Last Buffalo—Surprise a Party of Crows—Their great Fright—Artemesia Fire—No Buffalo west of the Rocky Mountains.

We arranged an early start, in order to make sure of catching up with our company, and were, accordingly, moving at the grey dawn. The country was very hilly for about ten miles, and then gradually subsided into large level tracts. We crossed in the course of the morning a river, which, from the width and depth of its nearly dry bed, must be one of very large volume in the wet seasons, though there were no mountains or hills in view calculated to feed such a current, and nooned rather late at another river, broad and rapid, where we found a notice nailed to a tree, informing us "that our company had camped there the night before," leaving them the whole morning's travel still ahead, which proved they must have been forcing up the steam rather strongly, making their daily average over twenty-five miles, to show us packers, I suppose, that we could not so easily outstrip them after all. We began our evening's march at a brisk pace, determined to join them, but soon got into a sandy district, with the travelling very deep and distressing, where we met a herd of about a dozen buffalo, ploughing down through it at full split, with their long tongues hanging and dripping, as if they were after a long chase. It so happened that we would just meet, and come in contact, had we and they continued their course; so that we gave way, reining in till they passed close by the noses of our horses, for so determined were they to go straight on, they would have rushed over and trampled on us. It was evident they broke from pursuit, as they would not of their own accord go at such a rate; but whether it was from a hunting party belonging to the waggons, or from Indians, we had no means of judging.

The sand-flat was bounded by a low ridge of the same material, where the animals sank to their bellies at every step; but as soon as we got over it we again espied the Platte, with a lovely level grass plain betwixt it and the sand-ridges, stretching away beyond view, without rush or bramble, or a glimpse of the waggons, to gladden the sight. We now increased our pace to a smart canter, crossing numerous clear streams, running eagerly to lose their fair name in the contaminating flood at our side; continuing at this rate for eight or ten miles, we were disappointed at not catching up with the waggons, though, by the look of the ordure, they certainly could not have passed more than an hour. It was now seven o'clock, and our horses showed they came more than forty miles, my brother packers as well betraying tokens of lassitude; but I coaxed them on as far as a clump of cotton-wood trees, about two miles ahead, where I promised to stop, whether we overtook the others or not; and there we did stop, without finding them.

It was very desirable, no doubt, to get over the journey as quickly as possible; but it was very bad policy to make forced marches without any urgent necessity, with fifteen hundred miles, the Rocky Mountains, and the Sierra Nevada yet to be surmounted. This I strongly felt, though no longer responsible, and made up my mind to express it the moment I had the opportunity.

According to our way-bill, and comparing it with our computed travel, we could not be far off the next crossing of the Platte, the point I now conjectured they strove to make, and one, from what I heard of its difficulty and danger, I sincerely wished we were all safe over, as its channel there gets so comparatively narrow, it becomes much too deep for fording; while its current is so excessively swift, the passage in a waggon-bed is a matter of extreme risk and labour. The sands about our encampment bore the impress of mocassins and bare feet so thickly and so newly made, the wonder was we could not see any living proofs of the Indian neighbourhood; and I assuredly would have been much more comfortable to have seen them *in propriâ personâ* than to remain under the impression that they were lurking about us. As we could not by any means expect to get clear through their territory unseen, leading the errant life they do, I was anxious at once to meet the redoubted Crows, and be relieved from further suspense whatever might be the consequence. We left the cricket and ants on the other side of the sand-hills, but in their stead we had gloomy visions of black Crows, more than three in number, to haunt our slumbers.

We tied on our packs and saddled our horses in the morning twilight, and soon after commenced our march, startling deer and antelope out of every slope, but giving them no molestation. About the time the sun arose, the report of a gun reached our ears, at which I cantered on to the rise before us, and there had revealed to view our fugitive friends in the act of hitching up. It was just as I expected; the waggon animals were overdriven, as evidenced by their raw shoulders and sluggish gait. They pressed us for an exchange, to which I acceded in so far as the mule "as would not pack" and another with a sore tail, caused by a bad crupper, the raw shoulders being of as little moment in packing as the sore tails in harness. We travelled on in company to the crossing point, discussing the matter in all its bearings, and arranging the order of work;

but as I was accustomed to boats and boating all my life, I was obliged to consent to be the Palinurus of the occasion, steering the light waggon-bed, for which we had a capital set of paddles, knowing the necessity for using them would frequently arise. However, to our great relief and joy, we found at the crossing a body of Mormons strongly entrenched in a heavy timber palisading, for their own protection and the security of their animals, as they informed us they were attacked by the Crows *en route;* and as they beat them off, their numbers being then small, they apprehended an attack from a larger body. Not very consolatory tidings for us packers, but we swallowed them without a question, and held our peace.

The Mormons, always on the look-out for gain as well as glory—or salvation, more properly speaking—travelled all the way from Salt Lake, over four hundred miles, to establish a ferry, anticipating a large overland emigration, and knowing there was no other point of passing, they finished two dug-out canoes since they came, on which they constructed a large platform, capable of carrying a loaded waggon in safety. This structure they worked with three large oars, one at each side, and one as a rudder, getting over smoothly enough, but at a terrible slant, which gave them hard labour in again working up against the stream, even with the assistance of two yoke of oxen pulling on the bank as on a canal. We got all our waggons, packs, luggage, harness, &c., over without any accident or interruption, but not so our animals; those we drove up a quarter of a mile, to give them space enough to work to the other shore at the proper landing, where alone they could get out as they reached the bank; and I have no doubt they would have gone over as they did on former occasions, by driving them in, but a young man, named Masters, took it into his head, contrary to the general remonstrance, to ride the bell-mare, getting on very well for two-thirds of the way, to where the channel of the river ran with a seething sweep along the opposite shore.

Here the mare, instinctively dreading the danger, turned round as she felt the influence of the current, and nearly all the mules being close upon her haunches, were carried, by their own impetus and that of the flood, right against her, rolling her and her rider under the water, and passing clean over. It was some moments after they passed when the mare again appeared, but she came to the surface without a rider, swimming languidly, unable to stem the stream, and pulling up her head violently at times, as if the bridle got foul of something below. We ran down the banks on each side, hoping to get a glimpse of poor Masters; not that we expected, after such a lapse of time, we could rescue him alive, but we were desirous to pay him the poor tribute of a rude burial. The mare at length gained the other shore, fully a mile below the point at which the waggons landed, but, instead of struggling up to dry land, she stood with her head drooped, looking so exhausted she seemed unable to move. Two of the men went down to where she was, and finding a weight attached to the bridle, they pulled on it, bringing to the surface one of poor Masters's arms, who had the rein firmly clutched in his hand in his death-grasp, which was the cause of the bad landing made by the mare, and of the tugging and chucking with her head that we remarked after her submersion. We had no wood to make a coffin, so we wrapped the body in a blanket, and lowered it into a deep grave, marking the spot with the stump of a cotton-wood tree, on which we carved his name, and the manner of his death.

I did not feel disposed to recommence travelling that evening, nor would we, if there was any grass about; but it was drifting sand all around, leaving us no other alternative but going on about five miles to where the Mormons said we would find good camping, as they stopped there, at good grass and water, on their way across. They requested payment of the ferryage in coffee and flour, allowing us a price that left a profit of two hundred per cent., and gave us a fresh way-bill up to the point where the Salt Lake trail diverges in a more southerly direction from the one we were to follow. Having a great desire to visit the new settlement of the Latter-Day Saints, as they delight in styling themselves, I made several inquiries respecting the difference of distances and comparison of routes, should we take it into our heads to change our minds and go that way; but I saw there was an evident reluctance to impart any encouraging information, as if they disliked the idea of our passing through their capital. I could not then divine the reason; but this very coyness only served to increase my anxiety, as interdict is always sure to beget desire, since the season of the memorable apple down to the days of Bluebeard, and thence to the present generation.

The waggons, from the very deep sand and high hills, were constrained to make a wide circuit; but with the pack-mules we took an Indian foot trail along the river in a direct line, the banks becoming high and precipitous as we proceeded, the path continuing to run close by the edge. After a few miles' progress we commenced ascending the hip of lofty sandstone bluffs in single file, as the trail would not admit of more. It wound up the heights impending over the river at such easy gradients we scarcely perceived our elevation, until we came to a sharp angle, where it suddenly narrowed, and the side of the hill became perfectly upright, with the river foaming at its base. My horse stopped short with a snort and a shudder that first made me feel the imminence of the danger—there was barely space for him to stand, as he leant inwards, crushing my knee and shoulder against the face of the rock. I looked cautiously round to see if there was any chance of retracing our steps, but immediately saw there was none—not even room for a goat to turn round—while the horsemen and pack-animals were all in a string, quite close together, pressing against one another in consequence of my stop. I felt my head queer, and would have dismounted if I could, but this was impracticable. While wavering from nervousness in this awful situation, my horse got a smart nip behind from an impatient mule, that made him wince, and what with the squeeling and noise in the rear, I knew they were biting and crowding each other, of which I had soon further proofs by their shoving bodily forward my trembling nag; so, seeing there was nothing for it but advance, I gently urged him, giving him full rein, when, with stooped head and distended eyes, he shuffled forward a little; leaning aside so much, he lacerated my knee very badly, till coming to a place where the path shelved so quickly outwards as to render the limited footing fearfully hazardous, he propped out his fore-legs, as if resolutely bent on going no further; but there was not time for a second's reflection, when the mules came bump against him, with an impetus that sent him sliding along.

I now yielded myself to fate, expecting the next instant would consign me to eternity; and was so completely robbed of consciousness I did not observe how the pass was got over. When I was able to draw a full breath I saw we had attained our greatest eminence, and though we had a little more room for descending, it was so steep, the only mode of getting down was by sliding on the breech. This was fine fun for the mules, who are perfectly at home in such places, and actually seemed to enjoy the terror of the horses, as I have seen boys ridicule the apprehensions of their more timid companions; for when mine would essay a cautious slide, the imp behind would cast himself off with such reckless abandonment, as to come on top of us in a few yards, his fore-feet on my shoulders, indulging in a jocular pinch at every pause. As we descended, however, both man and horse got reassured, and I felt myself perfectly at ease, when my horse, to make up for a long arrear of joking and nipping, sent out his heels with a whizz that put an end to the game for the present. It was a trying half-hour, and I do not think I could be bribed by all the gold the mules could carry to ride over the same track again.

We came to the camp-ground and had our food cooked before the waggons came up. Being here on a considerable eminence, with a strong cool breeze blowing, we were not much troubled with musquitoes, but there was a sand-tick, like a small clock, that crawled all over us, finally fixing on delicate places, where they stuck themselves into the skin with a tenacity that tested the strength of the finger-nails in dislodging them. There was nothing of the epicurean about them either, for they did not exhibit a partiality or preference for any one sample of blood over another, each individual being fully favoured with their patronage. Our skins looked as if we spent the night under soot drops; but the worst of it was, they got established in legions in the buffalo robes, from which there was no combing of them. I often heard the old say quoted, that "Poverty makes us acquainted with strange bedfellows;" but if I had any finger in the next edition of the Book of Proverbs, I would substitute "Travelling" for "Poverty," and maintain I would be fully warranted for the liberty with antiquity.

From the length of our daily journeys since we left Laramie, we thought it but fair-play to the animals to give them a day of comparative ease, by travelling slowly with the waggons; so next morning we permitted pausing to calculate their chances, were decided in their course by a joint discharge, which sealed the doom of one, and caused the others to fly. Those who ran first, now turned, and fired three guns, one of which grazed S. M'Q——n on the cheek; but, from the extraordinary whizzing of their contents, I think they must have been loaded with stones, that did not present a smooth surface to the atmosphere. In return for this we discharged two rifles, that brought another fellow down, and carried further dismay amongst them, were we to judge by the rapidity of their flight. Of course we did not attempt pursuit; we had quite enough to do to get our mules together and rearrange our packs, several of which were thrown off and scattered in the *mêlée*, and our accoutrements so smashed and tattered, it was a question if we could manage to bring all along, so as to rejoin the waggon, for we apprehended a night attack, in which we could have no earthly chance by ourselves.

While endeavouring to patch up, we saw our enemies watching us from the heights, which hurried our efforts at despatch, for fear they should come down upon us with a reinforcement; but it was a long hour before we could manage a start, and then at so slow and cautious a pace, lest our temporary fixings should give way, that I felt we could not come up with the waggons by sundown. Knowing we were dogged, and could only escape by a *ruse*, when night came on we made a feint of camping, and lit a large fire, as if we intended settling for the night; but as soon as it became dark we buckled up again, and set forward, calculating on a good start, as we knew they would wait until they thought we would be locked in sleep. It was provokingly dark, one of us being obliged to walk to pick out the trail; and, to add to our hazard and vexation, the mules now and then uttered a bray, expressive of their astonishment at our unusual proceedings, which we thought rendered our detection inevitable. At length, after three hours' groping in the dark, they set up a simultaneous braying, as if the foe was in the midst of them, but, to our great relief, it elicited a congenial response not far off, that gave token of our proximity to the waggon-camp. The noise and bustle of our arrival aroused all the men, who, in their great anxiety to hear all particulars, kept us up until the grey streak along the horizon foretold the approach of day.

On overhauling our trappings in the morning, we found them in such a sorry state it would have been madness to think of proceeding without a thorough repair; and in talking the matter dispassionately over again, we all agreed, as a funny fellow remarked, "that the Crows gave us *cause* for coinciding in Mr. Husband's opinion at last;" so we entered into a new arrangement, one of us going to each waggon or mess, and taking our animals to strengthen the teams, leaving six to the waggon (save one), and, from the strength of our troop of animals, and their spirits and condition, we felt sanguine about making a speedy trip of it.

This day's journey was through a scorched-looking country, covered with volcanic debris, very thickly strewn in places, and the water, everywhere we met it, so strongly impregnated at one time with salt, at another with sulphur and alkali, that it was wholly unfit for use. The sun was very hot, and we were correspondingly thirsty, when we came to a beautifully pellucid pond, from which issued a laughing, gurgling stream, that caused us all to hurry forward to bathe our shrivelled lips in its cool liquid; but, alas! we found it an arrant cheat, so thoroughly briny as to be altogether undrinkable: even the mules would not condescend to sip it; they, however, bathed themselves well in it by lying down, and seemed much refreshed by the operation.

The conical peaks of the Wind River range of snowy mountains were very visible this evening, as well as the indentation on the summit of the Rocky Mountains, which has got the name of the South Pass. We passed several small lakes, which presented a very strange appearance to the untravelled eye, looking like large fields of frosted snow, but were thick incrustations of carbonate of soda, caused by the evaporation of the mineral waters. It looked so beautifully pure, and tasted so well, we threw out all our chemical compounds, and supplied ourselves liberally with superior saleratus from this great natural laboratory, which we found made better bread than what we were in the habit of using. Soon after leaving them, we struck the Sweetwater, a river of considerable magnitude, which we heard abounded with fish; but I cannot confirm the character by our experience, for we did not get as much as a solitary nibble, though we tried hard. Our camp this evening was at the base of Independence Rock, as the trappers call it, which stands close by the river, on a stoneless plain, isolated and immense; and although one would suppose it must be the result of some angry whim of nature, there is no trace of convulsion about its smooth face or level bed to warrant the conclusion.

The Sweetwater is altogether a misnomer, being bitter of the two, carrying so much alkali in solution as to be destructive to fish. Five or six miles beyond our camp it cañons[*] through a perpendicular fissure, called Devil's Gate, where it rushes with great noise and velocity through its pent-up channel, along which there is no margin whatsoever, the rocks rising on each side about three hundred feet high. We crossed the river ere we came thus far, where it spreads out on a shoal gravelly bed, enabling us to ford it without difficulty. At the Devil's Gate we left the river, proceeding over a fertile level prairie, where we shot our last buffalo, and were near losing a horse (not our Buffalo horse) into the bargain; he got gored up the thigh, very narrowly escaping having the wound in the flank, where it would have been fatal. Although rising and descending for several weeks over hills and rising ground, it was evident the balance was largely in favour of ascent, but from Independence Rock the upward incline was almost invariable, and much of the ground deep heavy sand, which made our progress very slow indeed.

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[*] Canon signifies a gorge.

At noon we met the Sweetwater again, and were very much puzzled whether to cross and proceed up a narrow defile, where there were some traces of a trail, or keep on the side we were; at length we decided on remaining on the southern side, and fagged along till we came to a willowy dip of land, where we got grass and water. Before we halted we saw through the glass some Indians crouched on the brow of a hill that lay to the left hand of our course, and as we got into a hollow that hid us temporarily from their view, six horsemen galloped round to outflank them; I kept my eye on them through the glass as we again came in sight, but they did not appear to suspect anything at the moment; very shortly, however, thirteen or fourteen of them jumped up and disappeared, at the next instant reappearing on horseback. Plunging down the steep hill-side before us we galloped at them, raising a tremendous shout, that was taken up and echoed by our friends in the rear, so that the poor devils fancied themselves done for. They rode like furies, jumping through the thick bushes of artemesia; but although we could readily have shot some of them, we had no idea of harming them, merely getting up the affair as a little pastime to keep the men's spirits from stagnating. They dropped two fine robes, a black bear-skin, some bows and arrows, and a couple of things that I think, from the way in which they fit the head, were intended for war-masks.

We had this evening our first fire of artemesia, which throws out great heat, but is too quick for comfort. It is a strange but benign provision of Providence, without which it would be a matter of extreme difficulty, if not entire impossibilty, to cross the plains, that as the buffalô-chip becomes scarce the artemesia increases in abundance, and affords the unsheltered traveller a fire to cook his food, when no other fuel is within his reach upon the desert sands. I suppose it is the prevalence of this shrub that stops the buffalo, for you cease to meet a single indication of his presence within the region where it prevails, their range in those latitudes being confined to the eastward of the Rocky Mountains, the only game that inhabits those vast and dreary wastes being the wary antelope.

CHAPTER XI.

Lodge Pole-marks—Indian mode of Removing—Increase of Artemesia and Lizards—Fine View—South Pass—Contrast with the Imagination—Horse and Lodge Pole-marks—Cold Nights and Hot Days—Immense Indian Encampment—Our Feelings on seeing it—Move down to Camp on the River opposite them—Saluted by a White Man in our own Language—M. Vasques, of Fort Bridger—Tells us they are Shoshones, or Snake Indians—Their Character and Habits—Adopt the Salt Lake Route—Origin of Fort Bridger—M. Vasques' Speculation—Imposing Cortége—Trade with the Snakes—Enter the South Pass—The Pacific Springs—Thoughts of Home—Royal Bedfellow—Distance from Independence—Thoughts on Waggon Travel—Excitement of Travelling in New Countries—Severe Frost—Mountain Sickness—Appearance of the Country—Curious Buttes—The Little Sandy—Big Sandy—No Heath in America—Green River—Story of the Old Pawnee Mocassin.

NEXT day we got out of the deep sandy district into a light sandstone soil, covered with a short close herbage, the country very rolling, and some of the ascents very long, but excessively steep. There was no timber at all within view, nor any feature or object that lent a common interest to the view, so far as scenery was concerned; but in the course of the morning we saw innumerable horse-prints and countless lodge-pole trails directly in our route, and travelling in the same direction. Those we knew were the marks of a tribe of Indians, travelling with all their household goods to settle in a new location. The marks were new, and, from our comparative rates of travelling, we imagined they would gain considerably on us, a circumstance which, from their apparent numbers, would afford us infinite satisfaction; we were in expectation, too, that they might diverge and leave us our course free.

We struck the Sweetwater again, rather early for stopping, but, as the feed was abundant, and we did not know how soon we should meet water again if we went on, we remained on its banks for the night, and damaged a good deal of our provisions in getting over it, as it proved much deeper than we expected. There was no timber, but artemesia, of which we made our fragrant fires; but it was a perfume we were soon destined to get tired of and disgusted with. The sand-tick were here in great force, and soon fastened an acquaintance on us; there were also immense numbers of small lizards flitting about, from which, however, we experienced no annoyance, as they are timid reptiles, and avoid the neighbourhood of man.

Although the days were oppressively warm, we had severe frosts at night, and even within our tents the hair on the edges of our robes were quite white. In the mornings, at dawn, the brilliant sun sparkling on the hoar drapery of the distant Wind River range had a fine effect; but the inhospitable aspect of the dreary wastes of sage and sand, almost incapable of supporting aught else than insects and reptiles, cast a saddening gloom over the spirits.

The South Pass was now clearly distinguishable, widely differing from the pass we pictured in our glowing fancies. The name of the Rocky Mountains and the South Pass engendered a chain of mental associations that conjured up ideas of stupendous crags and beetling cliffs, on whose spiral summits the fleecy clouds perpetually nestled on spotless beds of everlasting snow, and narrow chinks and darkened chasms, through which the trembling traveller hurried, fearing to pause, and contemplate the sublime creations of nature, lest the dripping cracks should close and shut him into eternity. How widely different was the reality: a range of rounded mountains, without cone or peak, with a sloping gap some thirty miles wide, approached so gradually, that, only for the temperature at night, you could scarcely conceive you were on the summit of one of the ranges which in our geographical lessons we were wont to consider one of the great marvels of creation.

We had the horse-tracks and lodge-pole trails still ahead of us on our path, making, no doubt, for the pass too. The country was much the same as yesterday, but the "indecent sun" kept "baking, broiling, burning on," though we were near 7000 feet above the heads of our numerous acquaintances and distant relations. We made no noon stop, having had no temptation; nor, from appearances around, was there any prospect of better evening's fare. So I sent (for be it known to you I was reinstated in my command) to examine the country, and find a good camping-ground, even were it out of our line, for it was impossible our animals could work unless their stamina was kept up by nutriment. About four o'clock we saw them returning on the trail we were travelling, but could distinguish by their gait and air "our course *did not* run smooth." They found water, that is, they saw it at a distance from them; and they also found, that is, they saw at a distance from them, beside the stream, an immense Indian encampment, surrounded with a multitude of horses, so large that they questioned the prudence of proceeding. It was rather a difficult card to play, so I called a temporary halt to canvass opinion, and prepare, if necessary, for the encounter, for we were still in the country of the Crows, the Rocky Mountains being the boundary of their dominions to the westward. It was admitted that water should be had at all risks or hazards; but the lie of the country forbade the hope of finding it in any other direction; and, moreover, as our party had been unavoidably seen by the Indians, it was quite as well to go on and risk a conflict where they were as elsewhere, for they would assuredly follow us if bent on mischief. The preponderance of those considerations being in favour of going straight on, we made no further delay, looking to our arms and ammunition as we advanced. An hour's march brought us within view of the encampment, which covered thirty acres—the hill-sides for more than three miles around being actually alive with horses and ponies.

As we descended the slope towards the river I kept a sharp look-out through the glass, to see if they were preparing any hostile demonstration, but I discerned them to start two hours before us. The country in this region is hilly, broken, and sandy, covered with artemesia (wild sage), which we here met for the first time. There were lots of antelope, and when we overtook the waggons we found they had shot two. It was very late ere we reached a place to enjoy our mid-day rest; and half-blinded though we were with the drifting sand, we discovered in many places numerous horse-tracks coming from the opposite direction, which we knew must be Indians, as we met no travellers—the party, as we surmised, from whom the Mormons apprehended the attack; and I am almost ashamed to admit we were selfish and unamiable enough to felicitate ourselves on the supposition that they were travelling evidently in a different course from us.

About three o'clock we came to a brackish stream, flowing through a level barren tract, surrounded with high hills, and covered with a thick plumage of artemesia. Halting here, we gave the waggons another start; but just as we were in the act of mounting, after tying on our packs, a body of Crow Indians came down upon us at a sharp gallop. The moment we perceived them, with one impulse every rifle was levelled against them, but I forbade the pulling of a trigger without orders. They as instantly pulled up short, seeming to converse with one another. There was one squaw amongst them, with a great head-dress of feather, and as well as we could count, thirty-seven men, all nobly mounted. After a short conversation they came forward at a slow walk, making pacific signals of all sorts. My comrades, I must do them the justice to say, were averse to allowing them to come amongst us, and wished to fire; but bearing in mind how agreeably I was undeceived by the Siouxs, I over-persuaded them to permit the Crows to approach.

I mounted my horse in the front, while the chief and two others advanced, one on each side and one right before me, he held out his hand, and as I returned the civility, dropping my rifle on the horn of my saddle, and poising it with my left hand, he seized it with a firm grasp, the fellow on the opposite side clutching the rifle; but as both our hands were moist from perspiration, I succeeded in freeing myself, and pulled my revolver from my belt, my left side opponent, at the same time laying the muzzle of an old carabine on my cheek, which providentially missed fire, while the savage in front seized hold of the bridle-rein; but the horse, excited by the bustle, reared from the restraint, and pawing out violently, struck him a severe blow, that unhorsed and disabled him. Meantime, as I wheeled round, I saw the remainder of the band scuffling with my comrades, and others vainly endeavouring to drive off the mules from the horses; at length, as one of our party got a gash from a tomahawk, and our peril became pressing, Mr. D——e discharged a pistol, breaking the jaw of a savage, who set up a wild howl, and followed it up by firing another barrel, that took effect in the withers of an Indian horse, and sent him and his rider off in full retreat, followed closely by five or six others; the remainder of the Pacific,—an ebullition of kindliness and good feeling which I trust they duly appreciated.

We camped close to the springs on good pasture enough, with a few of the élite of the Snakes, the great bulk having gone on with all the camp equipage, diverging at a sharp angle in a northerly course. I gave the young chief a share of my couch, if only for the honour of being able to bequeath the proud boast, and leave it as "an heirloom in my family," that I slept with a royal bedfellow, descended from an ancient line of Potentates, who, ruling by the code of nature, never have their dynasty disturbed by innovation or revolution. According to M. Vasquez we were here three hundred and twenty-five miles from Laramie, making our entire distance from Independence one thousand and twenty-five miles—rather a formidable stretch to look back upon as having been compassed without roads or bridges, over mountains, rivers, and swamps—and as I reflected on the temper I remember often to have evinced during the rapid change of horses in a fast mail, or the short stop to water a locomotive, I enquired whether I could be the same individual who contentedly plodded beside the lazy wheels of a ponderous waggon for a period of sixty days. I would not have returned over the same track for any inducement, but the thousand miles in advance, like most mysteries or unseen wonders, were endowed with speculative charms conferring cheerful elasticity to the resolution, which made me regard them with curiosity rather than awe, notwithstanding the many disappointments the anticipative senses had already experienced.

We had a very severe frost in the night that caused me to lie close to my august companion, and in the morning everything was locked in icy manacles. The Snakes did not appear to mind it, though our fingers were so numb with the cold we could hardly prepare breakfast. Some of our men, who had been complaining for a day or two, now fairly knocked under with the mountain fever—not a very dangerous malady—but in its way fully as racking and prostrating as sea-sickness. Two of them were so ill they could not sit on horseback, so we made beds for then in the waggons. Though our trail lay over sandy wastes, dotted with artemesia, it was baked into a firm cake, and being slightly inclining downwards, made the draught light and easy. Our Snake friends having travelled with us ten or twelve miles, took their leave, dashing off in the direction their companions went the evening before. Soon after, a little more to the westward, we saw, as we thought, the effects of mirage, a parcel of detached elevated buttes of fanciful configuration, standing in towering grandeur, in the centre of a calm lake and far away to the south-east, a tall, conical bluff, also perfectly isolated, upraising its mitred head to the clouds. This and the buttes turned out to be real, the lake alone being imaginary, the glazed surface of the waste easily assuming that semblance.

We passed over several deep, dry ravines, through which the water floods take their course, and could see by their sides, where they were abruptly washed away, that there was no admixture of clay in the barren soil of the mountains; for at the depth of twenty feet it was still fine packed sand. A few antelope were observed scampering amongst the artemesia, but we did not go in pursuit of them, camping at a whey-coloured stream, called Little Sandy, an affluent of Green River, which receives the virgin tribute of the Pacific Springs. Near this is said to be a trail leading to Fort Hall, called, by trappers, Sublett's Cut-off, the discovery being attributed to a mountaineer of that name. The pasture was scant, confined to tufts of bunch grass, of a coarse and sapless character. I was somewhat disconcerted at finding a straggling band of musquitoes at this altitude; but the cold must have taken the venom out of their sting, for we suffered no torment from them beyond the blowing of their tiny horns; as to the sand-ticks, like many other nuisances, we learned to become indifferent to them, further than dislodging them from their strongholds in the mornings.

We nooned next day at Big Sandy, a largish river, running between very high and steep sandbanks, fringed in places with willow; it is also a tributary of Green River. Our route to it was an unvarying one of wild sage and sand, a disagreeable substitute for the rich brown heath and flowering heather which clothes our own mountain sides, and adorns them with its delicate bells of most beauteous floral organisation. I never met any heath in my rambles, nor, from inquiries, do I believe it exists, on the American continent. M. Vasquez said we would find a good camping stream between Big Sandy and Green River, but we travelled on till near midnight without happening to find it, pulling up, after a long and fatiguing day's journey, on a bald hill side, without water or grass. However, as day broke we saw below us, at a distance of about two miles, a large river, which we knew must be Green River, the head water of the Rio Colorado, or Red River of the West, which pursues its unexplored course through the Great Basin, emptying into the northern end of the Gulf of California. We were soon in motion, to indemnify ourselves for a supperless night by a plentiful breakfast. But I must not omit mentioning rather a ludicrous incident that occurred last night in the dark, when Mr. D—q—e, to quiet the pinchings of hunger, thrust his hand into the jerked meat sack for a piece of dried beef, and pulled out what appeared to him a good junk, which, after gnawing and tugging at for a long time without getting any toothsome bits, he brought to the light in my tent to cut into strips better adapted for mastication, when, to his great dismay, he found that he had been tearing and chewing one of the old sweaty mocassins I purchased from the filty Pawnee, that, by some means or other, found its way amongst the meat — I strongly suspect by the agency of some mischievous wag, who did not think proper to reveal himself in the face of Mr. D—q—e's foaming vengeance, which was of a very threatening character, and alarmingly aggravated by the universal laughter that followed the discovery. It was a standing joke afterwards, and no one ever ventured to taste jerked beef from thenceforward after sunset save by the light of a lamp.

CHAPTER XII.

The Ferrying of Green River—The Mode and Difficulty—The Hard Work swells our Invalid List—Dangerous Symptoms—Effects of the Mountain Fever—Extreme Heat—Bad Roads and Fatigue of Animals—Black's Fork of Green River—Scenery of the Wilderness—Fort Bridger—Purchase a Small Beef—Mr. Bridge's Kindness—Sage-Hens—The little Muddy—Waggon Accident—Visit from a small Party of Snakes—The Love of their Horses—Shaking Swamp—Another Waggon Accident—Bad River crossing—Drown a Mule—Crowd of Hills—Primitive Bridge—Fine Country—Shoot two Antelopes—Our old Tormentors—New Discovery—Slaughter of Rattle-Snakes—Midnight Indian Visit—Get into the Region of Snow—Slide down into a Narrow Valley—Great Anticipations of the Mormon City—Thunder Storm—Exciting Bear Hunt—Fright of the Animals—Distant View of the Mountains of the Salt Lake Valley—Romantic Scenery—Reflections—"The Jumping-off Place"—Unprecedented Descent—Comparison of the Dangers of a Fox Chase with such driving—Description of the Mormon Canon—Mormon Lime-burners.

We had at Green River, one of the longest and most trying jobs of the entire journey, there being no ferry, and the ford being altogether impracticable from the height of the waters, which rushed past with tremendous velocity, while the river was over 250 yards wide. In talking over the best and safest mode of crossing, some were in favour of a raft, others agreeing with me that it was only to be accomplished in a caulked waggon-bed; however, to prevent jealousy and grumbling, I allowed each section to take their own plan; and, unloading and dismounting my waggon, commenced caulking it with strips of calico, and ends of lamp-wick, melting pitch and resin over the seams; paddles we had, and made a long steering oar from the limb of a Cotton-wood tree the others cut down for their raft. We were ready for sea by dinner time, and launched our bark, making her fast till we despatched that meal; however, notwithstanding all our pains, she made a good deal of water, which we strove to deal with, by stowing below the articles that suffered least damage from wet, taking in only a moderate cargo for the first, casting off with two stout fellows at the paddles, and myself at the helm. But before we got properly at work, we were whirled round and round in the curling eddies, and hurried down with fearful rapidity. Still we continued to make a gradual offing as well as a great deal of water, and touched the opposite shore a long way down, in a waterlogged state. After unloading, we had a long and tough pull up stream, to a bend which we selected as our port of departure, homeward bound, and made rather a better landing than the other, but still very low down, involving another trying pull up. But as the paddling, discharging, and pulling up was too much for the ferrymen, instead of a cargo I made the next trip, carrying four hands for that duty on the other side. It took six trips to get over the contents of my waggon, together with the harness, wheels, hounds, axles, poles, and couplings, by which time we were completely knocked up, and the day spent; so, leaving the four men beyond in charge, we devoted the remainder of the evening to testing the raft, which, after a straining struggle in launching, had scarcely sufficient buoyancy to float itself, not to mention the utter impossibility of either guiding or tugging it up against the stream. However, as it cost such trouble, we resolved on making it subservient to some use, by lashing on it the wheels of the other three waggons, which of themselves had some floating properties, and could take no harm by being submerged. Next morning we started with it, in tow of the waggon-bed, the first trip, and I kept paying out a long line, when the stream was so heavy as to interfere with our progress, until I reached near shore, when I cast the balance of the coil to the men on the bank, who brought it up with great difficulty. It took sixteen other trips to get over the remainder of the loading and the rest of the company; and as there were only five men who could make even an attempt at paddling, the work fell very heavy on them.

Two of them were on the sick list before night, and a third (myself) felt very unwell. We got over the animals without accident, though five were swept down at least a mile; it occupied us till night remounting our waggons and repacking them. The following morning the two sick men were in high fever, and having no person amongst us who had even a smattering of medicine (perhaps a fortunate circumstance), I became very uneasy; bleeding was strongly urged, but I had recourse alone to low diet and cooling aperients, which produced so good an effect, that within three days they were convalescent; the men who were first attacked with mountain fever being now also able to sit on horseback, to make room for others who caught it. We travelled along the river for eight miles, when the trail diverged through the bluffs, and continued through a most sterile country all day, more barren and desolate than any we had yet entered. I felt very ill indeed, keeping upright on my horse with the greatest difficulty; suffering from headache, pains and weakness of the loins, together with general languor, and total loss of appetite, being frequently obliged to dismount and stretch a few moments on the ground to ease my back, all this under a blazing sun was not very agreeable. However, I had to bear it, as there was a sick man already in each waggon, and another would increase the load too much, for travelling as we were now in soft, deep sand, where an empty waggon was almost enough for a team, the middle of the day became so insufferably hot, that even the hardy Mexican mules, habituated to a sultry climate, began to flag, and the saddle-horses positively to reel from weakness. I therefore called a halt for a few hours in an artemesian scrub, where there was not a blade of grass; but even if there was the animals could not eat, they seemed to suffer so from fatigue and heat. Rest and shade was what they most wanted, and in a very short time after they were turned loose, they were nearly all lying down amongst the bushes, getting up lazily and reluctantly when we set about starting two hours subsequently.

We kept ploughing on through sage and sand all the afternoon, until we reached what M. Vasquez laid down as Black's Fork of Green River, where we gathered some withered branches of artemesia for cooking supper, which very few seemed disposed to eat, all attributing their nausea and sickness to the exhalations of the ever present sage. I had the same idea myself, though I never heard of such consequences being attributed to it. We flushed this evening some large birds near our camp, which Mr. Bridger afterwards told us were sage-hens—very fleshy and palatable to those not labouring under the prejudices we were. The country from Black's Fork to Fort Bridger, is much of a piece with that of yesterday as to barrenness, but what with sandstone bluffs and buttes of fantastic configuration, the scenery was a little more diversified; in some places they rose quite perpendicularly, streaked with various shades and hues at the several strata. One very conspicuous butte, of immense proportions, stood apart from the rest, towering aloft like the dome of some mighty temple, which I felt a great inclination to visit, but I was so languid I had not energy to do so, as it lay some miles aside from our path. We encamped to-night again without water, a privation peculiarly irksome to those affected with fever, whose parched palates and shrivelled lips betokened their sufferings; the sucking of a piece of linen rag soaked in vinegar being the only relief we could give them.

We reached the plain on which Fort Bridger stands early next day, and, as we emerged from the atmosphere of artemesia and got good water, together with the luxury of a little milk for the invalids, we all felt a change for the better before evening, and were able to partake of a little supper. I cannot imagine how the term fort came to be applied to those trading stations, for they have no one point of resemblance to such a structure; Fort Bridger being even more completely destitute than the others of any such feature. It is simply composed of a few log huts, closely huddled together, without as much as a loop-hole to discharge a musket through. In one of those Mr. Bridger lives with his Indian wife, M. Vasquez' family occupied another, a third was a store, and the fourth contained a good forge and a rude carpenter's shop. We stopped a day to rest, from the beneficial effects the air seemed to have on the ailing men, and to make amends to the animals on the good pasture, for the poor fare they had since we left Green River. Mr. Bridger permitted us the use of his workshops to make some little repairs; our waggons required to have the tyres cut and tightened, but it was too much of a job in the absence of a regular mechanic, so we postponed it until we got to Salt Lake.

We purchased a small fat beef for twenty dollars, being very much in want of fresh meat now that we were so long out of the buffalo range, and enjoyed the luxury of some regular roast joints, having been given the use of the kitchen. Mr. Bridger, though not forty years of age, has had more experience as a mountaineer than any other dweller amongst them, as he not only traded with the Indians at the fort, but, taking a plea-none, not even as much as a curious group striving to gaze at the equipments of the pale-faces. I thought I could perceive an object like a waggon in the middle of their camp; however, the improbability of such a circumstance made me place it to other account. We now got so close that all their motions could be seen distinctly with the naked eye; yet they did not appear to take the slightest notice, or bestow any attention on us. Some were squatted, with their pappooses playing about them, and others were moving about amongst the wigwams and horses. Our waggons came along as close as they could travel, with the horsemen close up too; but as the trail, leading to the ford and from it, penetrated the very centre of the encampment, I determined on pitching our tents on our own side, though the feed was very indifferent, thinking, if they did not attack, they might move off early in the morning and leave the road open; besides, it would be easier to guard our animals. However, as we were drawing up into corral, a white man, habited in civilised costume, approached, riding over the stream, shouting loudly but unintelligibly, which caused me to go down to ascertain his meaning; when, after saluting me politely, he introduced himself as M. Vasquez, of Fort Bridger.

He told me we had better cross into the good pasture, as there was no danger to be apprehended, for though still in the Crow country, the tribe on the other side were the Shoshonee, or Snake Indians, a most peaceable, well-disposed people, who intermarry largely with the Crows, and that this party were now on their way to their own country, after wintering amidst their connexions. I did not therefore hesitate, and M. Vasquez had a good site fixed on for our camp when we got over, vouching we might dispense with watching while amongst them, as they made it a point of honour never to outrage hospitality by theft or outrage. They are a fine race of amiable men, good looking, and of good stature; but their women are not nearly equal to the Siouxs, yet there are, notwithstanding, more white trappers and half-castes married amongst them than any other tribe in North America, probably owing to their peaceable habits and mild disposition. They have abundance of fine horses, and are good judges of horse-flesh, daring riders, and regular jockies in driving a trade. We had several offers of trade in the course of the evening, but confined our business to mocassins, of which they had a good supply, and better made than any we got. Seeing that our predilection lay that way, all the squaws went to work, and made a stock over night that would serve a regiment.

A lot of us spent the evening in M. Vasquez' quarters, who gave us minute details of the route to Fort Bridger, as by his advice we took that line to Salt Lake in preference to the Fort Hall, or northern route. He is a Frenchman, the partner of Mr. Bridger, in the fort, or trading-post, which they established many years since, making a large fortune, in bartering their baubles for skins and valuable furs. And now that they have achieved the object of their enterprise, they have contracted such a liking for life in the wilderness, to banish all desire of enjoying the luxuries their wealth would procure them; contented and happy in the society of their unlettered neighbours, whose friendship and affections they possess. M. Vasquez met them here by accident, for he came on a speculation with a number of horses, hoping to find good customers in the emigrants, who he foresaw would stand in need of recruiting their teams after one thousand miles travel, and I have no doubt he made a good thing of it. We exchanged three of our most crippled nags, giving boot, which he was anxious to get in flour and coffee, but these we could not spare. He congratulated us on getting through the Crows unscathed, even with our full number, but designated it sheer madness to have attempted it only four strong. The United States government have made him a proposition to purchase the fort as a military station, to keep those savages in check, and I should think it will result in a bargain, as the Indians here can barely now get enough of skins for covering, much less for barter.

Next morning our cortége was an imposing one, for the Snakes packed up and accompanied us with their horses, and dogs, drawing their lodge-pole vehicles, their squaws slung round with pappooses, and the men mounted on their chargers, without any encumbrance but their arms or weapons. They appeared quite proud of our company, and gave us several proofs of their skill as marksmen and their surpassing horsemanship. As we went along, a young chief who had been practising with my rifle, succeeded so well he became quite enamoured of it, offering everything he possessed in exchange. However I was disinclined to part with it, until tempted by two superb horses that were worth a rack full of rifles. All Indians prefer the flint to the percussion-lock, for they can readily get flint that will answer the one, while the other may be perfectly useless from their inability to procure caps.

Our road was almost up-hill all day, but never so very steep as to require double teaming, nor so rough, as to convey a notion of the Rocky Mountains. We got into the mouth of the pass early in the afternoon, which, as I have already described it, is a wide, smooth slope, with scarcely a rock or stone on its surface. In some of the dips having a northern exposure, there were some faint vestiges of winter that another week would entirely obliterate; but digging to the depth of a few feet in wet spots, we came to a flag of ice as firm as a rock, which I think remains unthawed from season to season. After getting fairly on the top level of the Pass, the trail is level for better than a mile, when it yields with a gentle inclination to the Pacific springs, the first water that holds a westward course towards the great ocean they are called after. Here, with one accord, we halted, to gaze for the last time on the eastern hills and valleys of the Atlantic slope. I strained my eyes, looking abstractedly towards the eastern horizon for the spires and steeples of Sligo, and the familiar faces of my old acquaintances; and as they all appeared on the camera obscura of my imagination I felt a pleasurable sadness that for the instant wholly absorbed me; but I was soon brought to "a sense of my situation" by three lusty cheers, given as a sort of adieu to our friends before descending into the valley could not stop until it came against the lead mules of the waggon next in order, knocking them down, and hurting them so badly, I at first thought they could not be brought on; but mules are tough, and so they limped on in the loose crowd, and in a few days were as brisk as bees again.

We had a visit at our camp this evening from a small party of Snakes, who brought some antelope meat for trade, and led along a couple of screws on which the crows (I don't mean the Crow Indians) had a mortgage, and served notice of foreclosure. We got the meat for a little powder, but declined entering into any negotiation for their used-up horses. One of them was riding a superb milk-white animal with flowing mane and tail, the beau ideal of a field-marshal's charger; but as I walked round admiring him, with the intention of making an offer, divining my intention, he shook his head, laughed, and galloped away, least I might tempt him to part with his noble favourite—stooping over his crest, and affectionately patting him on the neck with an attachment similar to that recorded of the Bedouin Arabs.

Soon after starting next morning we came to a swampy bottom that could not be crossed by a man with snow shoes, much less a loaded waggon; but as the trail went directly over it, and the craggy hills did not admit of any other exit, we set to work cutting brush and wattles, strewing them thickly on the surface to prevent the wheels cutting in. It answered admirably in this respect, but the small narrow hoofs of the mules frequently slipped through, causing such excessive trouble and delay in extricating them that we hauled the three last over by hand a distance of half a mile, which took a quantity of brush that would make a pile as large as the Colosseum. We then ascended with vast toil, propping the wheels every ten yards, travelling along an elevated ridge, a good distance from which we went down by a sudden slant, where even the footing of the mules was very insecure, adopting the precaution of having four men on the upper side holding ropes made fast to the top of each waggon, to haul on if they threatened to overbalance; but, notwithstanding this, one of them took a sudden lurch, pulling the men off their balance, and went down the hill with a crash, smashing the bows, scattering the load, throwing down the mules, and breaking the harness in several places. It looked an irreparable wreck at first, but when all the fractures came to be examined, there were none of such a very serious nature as to cause abandonment. All hands immediately commenced splicing and patching, and had it again in a sort of travelling trim in an hour.

We next got into a narrow but fertile valley, hemmed in with hills, through which Bear River flows, a belt of timber with a thick copse of blossoming shrubs, and beds of budding wild geranium marking its course. The banks were low and level on each side of it, but the current was very rapid, and the bottom composed of large round loose stones, which were slippery, and turned under the tread. The depth of water rendered it necessary to prop up the waggon-beds; and, to prevent the lead mules from swerving with the stream, we attached a long rope to the cheeks of their bridles and passed it over with a horseman. Here again we had another vexatious accident on the crossing of the first waggon, the off-side mule in the middle span falling, and getting so tangled in the harness and trampled on by the others, she could not recover herself, and was drowned before we could render any assistance, which was difficult in the extreme, with a surging current up to the armpits. I got a severe bruise in extricating the dead mule, which made me lame for three weeks afterwards. It was impossible to get in a fresh mule, but we fastened a stout rope to the end of the pole, passing it out betwixt the leaders to the men on the bank, with whose assistance we got the rest of the way. Adopting the same plan with the other waggons, we kept up a lively motion that counteracted the effects of the flood, and enabled us to get them over with comparative despatch.

We travelled along the river for a few miles, and then passed through a deep defile into a brambly hollow, where the trail was almost entirely blinded and overgrown, but we tore our way through directly for a turn of the opposite rise, around which it was more plainly discernible. This brought us into a mob of hills, ascending and descending at perilous gradients, with barely fifty yards at a time of level pulling. They were verdant and grassy; and although we did not see any animals about, they looked as if they were fed over and cropped, the tips of the blades not being positively in the state that nature left them. After three hours' tossing amongst those ground-swells, we came into an open alluvial valley, springy with thick herbage, like a Turkey carpet, and piebald from the beds of flowers and the wild flax, with its soft blue blossom. There was no going beyond this, so we unhitched alongside a narrow river, running slowly between high banks, which, on sounding, proved eight feet deep. While supper was preparing, the handiest of the party undertook to amend the hurried cobbling of the morning, and I went to search for a shallow place for getting over. I did hit upon shoaler water than that at the camp, but still too deep to cross without soaking everything in the waggons, prop them up as we dared. In this dilemma I thought the safest and most judicious plan would be to pass the articles over by hand, and float the waggons across; and as a means of doing so, cut down two cotton-wood trees, and dragged them with a team of mules to a narrow, favourable spot, stretching them aside each other from bank to bank.

On this rude bridge we commenced at daylight carrying over; and working with a will, as the sailors term it, had the waggons across and reloaded while a person with a hesitation in his speech would be uttering the all-familiar name of Mr. John Robinson, more generally called Jack by a presuming public. We had a lovely forenoon's drive over a magnificent country swelling in graceful undulations, and robed in the most gorgeous garniture of nature, with herbage so close and deep in some places as to offer considerable obstruction to progress. In the course of the day we shot two antelope in prime order, their thighs shaking in masses of flesh like the cheeks of the fat boy in "Pickwick." At a season-able hour in the evening we entered a pleasing green valley, circumscribed in breadth, but seemingly extending some miles with cedar-clad hills on each side, and a deep stream winding through it, like the inflections of a snake, from side to side, leaving no margin to get round, so that we were compelled to cross it at every bend. After doing so five times within an hour, once with great bother, we lit our fires for the night, and had a sumptuous feast on antelope-steak, the savoury odours of which, I suppose, brought a legion of our old tormentors about our ears, and they certainly made up for their absence by the vigour of their attacks. It was positively maddening; even the animals were moaning in agony under the infliction, rubbing up against each other, and scratching their jaws against their knees. I took some of the fat from the intestines of the antelopes and smeared my neck, face, and hands all over, which gave me a respite—an example that was quickly followed by the others with equally good effects. Under this unctuous veil we got sleep for some time, until the extremities of the prominent features became dried up by heat and drainage, when they were instantly invaded by a sanguinary host. I awoke in extreme torture, and found the heights along my nose, my chin, and cheek-bones in possession of the enemy, who were also entrenched behind my eyebrows; but I dislodged them by a coup-de-main, and threw up another curtain of grease that secured me from further annoyance till morning. The place abounded with rattlesnakes, too, of which we killed three in the evening, and five more in the morning, when catching up the animals.

The entire length of the valley, though not over five miles, occupied us till late noon, for we had to cross the stream no less than fifteen times in that distance; and as we got down towards the end it became very troublesome indeed, putting us to the bother of cutting tracks on each side for the going in and out, which, from the height of the banks and the narrowness of the stream, required to be carried back with a long slant, to guard against accidents. After crossing it the last time, we got into a dense willow scrub, through which it was very difficult to pass even on horseback, and at the mouth the valley became contracted betwixt a pair of great sandstone jaws, formed by lofty rugged cliffs, barely leaving room, with the nicest pilotage, for getting out between their base and the river edge. We now began to ascend a chain of hills that abutted against a very high mountain range covered with snow, over which our route lay, which we ascended slowly, in serpentine mazes, till we came to a small lake of clear, well-tasted water, with good grass, around which we took up our lodgings for the night; but were here again obliged to have recourse to the grease, else abandon our position to the musquitoes; the snakes were so exceedingly numerous, none of us felt inclined to sleep: even the men on guard were nervous, lest in trampling on one in the dark they should get bitten.

We were near having human blood shed during the night, for as the second watch came in to be relieved they found six Indians sitting round the embers of the fire, and would have shot at them, only that they were in a range with the tents. The noise of the altercation awoke us all. They were given to understand that they ran a great risk by coming after dark, and were warned never again to venture near a pale-face camp in the night. But they seemed provokingly indifferent, not appearing the least concerned at their situation; and the more we sought to impress them with a sense of their danger, "the more they kept never mindin' us." I am satisfied they made trial of this experiment to ascertain their chances in a predatory visit afterwards, though they had the pretext of a few untanned antelope skins for trade, which was only a cover; and though unwilling to harbour any bad opinion of the Snakes, I believe they were of that tribe from the neighbourhood we were then in. We detained them till morning, and got them to travel with us for a few hours, endeavouring to get information from them respecting the easiest passes through the mountain peaks we were ascending.

The trail was admirably chosen, and turned up the steepest ascent with an easy inclination that would have done credit to the most civil engineer. The firm surface, too, without being so very smooth as to render footing uncertain, presented no obstacle whatever to the wheels, so that we got on capitally, reaching the summit of the snow ridges by four o'clock. From this we descended to a long spur jutting out in a westerly direction, and went along its edge or back for three or four miles, without any feeling of insecurity, for its sides, though steep, were thickly timbered, shutting out the terrors of the view. From this we descended almost in a slide for near two miles into a wallel in valley, where the sun can never shine except at noon, so narrow is its compass and so steep its sides. We found plenty of cedar-stumps and branches that were washed down by the floods for our fires, and meadows of grass for the animals, with fine water to boot; so that we rested from our day's travel in high spirits, and chatted in mirthful anticipation of the fine times we would have in the city of the Mormons, which we hoped to reach the day after next, feasting on vegetables, milk, butter, and cheese, and charmed with the music of the ladies' sweet voices.

During the night we had a very severe thunderstorm, which for awhile I thought was going to annihilate us, as a vivid flash of lightning would shoot forth, pointing out where we were all ensconced, and then a peal of thunder would come rumbling down the pent-up glen, as if it would crush us under its wheels. It was very grand, I admit, but I always preferred reading of those sublime phenomena to looking on at the affair; for, although we had several very imposing reviews of celestial artillery since we set out, I some way or other succeeded in persuading myself that they were only firing blank cartridge, until the present occasion; however, we all providentially escaped, unless it were a spent ball that scored one of our mules along the thigh.

About dawn of day the guard, attracted by a noise amongst some cedars in our rear, caused by heavy trampling and crackling of branches, ran down, supposing them to be pimping Indians; but the sound ceased as they came abreast of it, when one of them ventured into the scrub to see what it was, and sung out, with all the strength of his lungs, "A bear!—a bear!" which soon brought us all to his side. We could not see him clearly in the grey light, but from the noise now and then we knew exactly where he was; so some went below, others above, and more in the open space, and kept closing up, the heights at his back being too steep to ascend. As we narrowed our circle, expecting to have him hemmed in in the centre, we saw the gentleman climbing, hand over hand, up amongst the stumps and brambles that grew from the side; but three or four shots, simultaneously fired at him, made him drop down, not in one fall, but in a rapid succession of descents from branch to branch; and thinking he was wounded, we spread ourselves out a little lest he should attack any too close to him. As soon as he got fairly down he looked fiercely around him for an instant, some blood being apparent on his right shoulder, and then charged determinedly up the glen, soon making a gap for his retreat, in which he was sheltered from aim by the trees and underbrush. We all gave chase and tongue, creating such a tumult in this lonely place as was never heard there since the flood, which caused him to break cover for the greater facilities of escape, running up the green lea where the animals were grazing, who, as soon as they saw him, snorted, brayed, and neighed, and, as he approached, took to their heels, looking wildly over their shoulders every few yards as they galloped off before him; which prevented our firing, and our further pursuit as well, for in running down our game we might lose our animals. This was provoking enough, but ludicrous withal, as you would say if you were looking on. Shortly after we desisted Bruin again took into the scrub; and though the horses and mules abated their pace, and some stopped altogether, they kept looking round with uplifted heads at any little noise, making a fresh burst for a short distance. We had some trouble in getting up to and beyond them, and a great deal in getting them back, as every now and then they would draw up into a bunch, until they came opposite the spot where the bear disappeared, when they set off with frantic speed as far as the waggons, wheeling and caracolling for a quarter of an hour without stopping.

We travelled through the twists and sinuosities of the glen for six or seven miles, and at length reached an expansive hollow, that in Ireland would go by the name of "a punch-bowl," but the one in question bore about the same proportion to the Milesian utensil as the continent does to the island; the hills around it were both high and steep, and tried the mettle of the mules to the utmost, for they could not proceed over ten yards without a rest, two men being in readiness to block up the wheels, and two more to jump on the front spokes. By this intermitting process we got to the top after an hour and a half's hard tugging, where we took a good breathing spell. About twenty-five miles in front, running nearly north and south, lay a long range of snow-covered mountains of unusual configuration, terminating in sharp edges and pointed peaks, which gave one the idea of minarets and spires, their sides being covered with gross timber close up to the verge of the snowy hoods that covered their heads. The space between them and us was made up of red clay hills, that ran up also into sharp points and edges, timbered the whole way to the top, and, in some instances, capped with snow. It was a scene of great grandeur and romantic sublimity, that tinged the admiration with a reverential awe, and led away contemplation from mundane reflections to a chastened, worshipful reverie on the glory and omnipotence of God.

I knew our trail intersected the mountains in a westerly course, still I could not see any split or open in their sides that looked like a pass or an indentation along the ridge that had a practicable look, and was obliged to leave the solution of the difficulty for the present, in accordance with the maxim in such cases, having besides quite enough to engage my undivided thought and attention; for we came to a brow, called by a wag "the jumping-off place," where parachutes might be brought into requisition, the drop being so quick and so long that it appeared an undertaking of hopeless impossibility to get down in the ordinary way. Locking could produce only a trivial effect on such a declivity, where the flat waggon-beds, taken off the wheels altogether, would run down in a slide. I therefore suggested the propriety of unloading and dismounting them; but one teamster, the man who met with the accident in Ash Hollow, volunteered to try it, if all hands assisted with ropes—assistance which, of course, was unanimously tendered—and he got into the saddle, with only the wheel-span, with a coolness and deliberation that only few men could muster in such circumstances. I was fearful, but kept my thoughts to myself, lest he should be daunted in the slightest where he required all nerve and self-possession. Talk of the dangers of a fox-chase and the perils of steeple-chasing—of which I have a tolerably accurate idea, having been in and out of the saddle in both pursuits—but they fade in my mind into utter insignificance in comparison with those encountered by teamsters in such descents, with the mules sliding on their breeches, the driver's head right up in the waggon, which the stumble of an animal, the breaking of a rope or lock-chain, would precipitate upon him with fatal effect. What one successfully tried another was game for; so, after luckily getting the first to the bottom, a second was prepared to run the hazard also,—and the third,—and the fourth—all providentially succeeding in landing in safety, without the slightest accident of any sort.

The vale or glen was precisely the shape of a V, densely wooded, the trail lying along the bottom, which was rugged, from being torn up by the torrents at times, and at every hundred yards or so presented a barrier in a ponderous trunk or branch lying across it, necessure himself in the sport of trapping, was in the habit of leaving his partner as the home manager, and spending a great deal of his time in roaming through the fastnesses of the wilderness, by which means he became intimate with every practicable route or locality that could be mentioned. He was excessively kind and patient with me in laying down the route to Salt Lake, taking the trouble, for my information and guidance, of drawing a chart, with charcoal on the door, of the country through which we were to travel, pointing out a new line that had never yet been attempted, which would be a short cut of thirty miles; but, as we were travelling by waggons, he did not think it advisable we should run the risk of going over a wholly unbeaten track, though, he said, it might be safely undertaken with pack-mules; he estimated the distance from the South Pass to Fort Bridger, in round numbers, at 130 miles, which made us 1155 from Independence.

We left Fort Bridger early in the morning of the third day after our arrival, wonderfully recruited and recovered, and the animals as well, with a fresh stock of pluck and vigour. The hills immediately bounding the plain are thickly covered with fine cedar, whose rich, deep-green foliage, had a pleasing influence on the eye. Winding through its groves we gained the top, from which the land stretched away, without a dip or inclination, as if the plain below was an excavation rather than the sweep of an undulation. We soon again got into the regions of sage, which I believe, from the force of imagination, caused some of the convalescents to relapse. One of the party shot a brace of sage-hens, which are as large as the ptarmigan of the Highlands of Scotland, resembling it precisely in appearance, save only the plumage, which is not nearly so light. Though not in season I should say, they were in fine condition, but tasted too strongly of the sage to be much relished under our present impressions, which left to the few who were uninfluenced by them, an ample feast, to which they did as ample justice.

We deferred our nooning beyond the usual hour, seeing indications of a valley ahead, where we hoped to strike a stream, called The Little Muddy, in the neighbourhood of which, Mr. Bridger said, we would find good grass. The descent was very steep, strewed over with loose round stones, which coming in contact with the locked wheels, often swayed round the waggons, to the imminent risk of their overturning. The plain below was richly covered with fine succulent grasses and beautiful flowers; large sycamores and cotton wood trees, standing in irregular rows along the river, which is most appropriately christened, its sludgy bed being composed of such adhesive stuff. We snapped two sets of traces in getting the waggons over. We did not travel long up it, crossing a bluff at right angles, precisely corresponding with the one we so lately descended, where we had an accident that disabled for the present a span of our best mules; one of the waggons, meeting a round stone on the pinch of a steep ascent, checked the team so badly, that they gave way, and, once getting a downward impulse, it prise, at our having accomplished so long and arduous a journey so early in the season. We gave them all the late news, and what was still more acceptable, a bowl of good coffee, which was then not to be had at Salt Lake; for which we got in return good news as to the wealth of California, and most agreeable intelligence touching the abundance of vegetables, butter, cheese, meat, &c., in the settlement. We spent a right jolly night round the fire of the kiln, having, in honour of the occasion, the first jorum of regular brandy-punch we had tasted since our start. The Mormons were in great spirits, and gave us lines and tokens of introduction to their friends and families in the city, which they said would insure us attention and hospitality.

We were still twelve miles from the mouth of the cañon, as they call it, but the road was considerably better than that we had already passed, as the Mormons come thus far for their timber and lime, and for their own convenience made it more travelable. Our reception was the more cordial from our being mostly all foreigners, and not obnoxious to the prejudice they naturally entertain against Americans, who destroyed their first city, and banished them to this remote location. They expected to have many of their little wants supplied from our waggons, for which they were prepared either to give a liberal trade in any article they possessed, or a high price in gold dust, with which they were all well supplied.

After starting next morning we met five ox-waggons and a party of Mormons coming from the city for timber, who were likewise astonished at our expedition, and evinced great anxiety to learn what we carried, as they conceived we came solely on a trading speculation, it was so much out of the direct line to California. We gave them some tobacco, of which they said they were in great need; a civility they reciprocated by giving us an introduction to some relatives of theirs who had just returned from California by the north end of Salt Lake, and would give us all particulars about the mines, and the nature of the new route first discovered by them from Salt Lake valley to that country, which alone was practicable for waggons. The drive through the remainder of the cañon was, as I said, comparatively easy and smooth, but far from agreeable. Within about a mile of the mouth it opened into a bosom, and then again contracted into a gullet, narrow, steep, and impending, through which we emerged again into the world of clear daylight and fresh air, the valley of the Great Salt Lake opening out before us as if we came through the portals of a gate.

Here again I was doomed to great disappointment, for instead of a charming valley, beautifully diversified with wood and water, there was a bald, level plain, extending over to the base of the Utah range on the other side, without bush or bramble to cast a shade from the scorching rays of a flaming sun, that blazed with twofold intensity, reflected by the lofty ranges by which the plain is bounded. Some miles to the north lay the Great Salt Lake, glistening in radiance like a sheet of crystals, in strange contrast with the dark and sombre Utah range that stretch along its western shores. At first the city was not visible, but on passing over a piece of table-land, the new capital of the Mormons became revealed—not, I must admit, with any very striking effect, for it was too young as yet to boast the stately ornaments of spire and dome which first attract the eye of the anxious traveller. We saw from here with great distinctness the plan of the place, which had nothing novel or peculiar about it, laid out in very wide regular streets, radiating from a large space in the centre, where there appeared the basement and tall scaffolding-poles of an immense building in progress of erection. The houses were far apart, each being allotted a space for gardens and enclosure, which caused it to cover a very large space of ground.

We were soon discovered coming down the slope, and as we entered the precincts of the town the inhabitants came to the front of their houses, but showed no disposition to open an acquaintance account, believing us to be an exclusively American caravan. So soon, however, as they were undeceived, they came about us in great numbers, enquiring what we had to dispose of. They were neat and well clad, their children tidy, the rosy glow of health and robustness mantling on the cheeks of all, while the softer tints of female loveliness prevailed to a degree that goes far to prove those "Latter-Day Saints" have very correct notions of angelic perfectability. We politely declined several courteous offers of gratuitous lodging, selecting our quarters in a luxuriant meadow at the north end of the city; but had not our tents well pitched when we had loads of presents—butter, milk, small cheeses, eggs, and vegetables, which we received reluctantly, not having any equivalent returns to make, except in money, which they altogether declined; in fact, the only thing we had in superabundance were preserved apples and peaches, a portion of which we presented to one of the elders, who gave a delightful party in the evening, at which all our folk were present. We found a very large and joyous throng assembled; the house turned inside out to make more room on the occasion, with gaiety, unembarrassed by ceremony, animating the whole, making me almost fancy I was spending the evening amongst the crowded haunts of the old world, instead of a sequestered valley lying between the Utah and Timpanago mountains. After tea was served,

> There were the sounds of dancing feet
> Mingling with the tones of music sweet;

or, as Dermot Mac Fig would say,

> We shook a loose toe,
> While he humoured the bow;

keeping it up to a late hour, perfectly enraptured with the Mormon ladies, and Mormon hospitality.

I was not aware, before, that polygamy was sanctioned by their creed, beyond a species of etherial platonism which accorded to its especial saints chosen partners, called "spiritual wives;" but I now found that these, contrary to one's ordinary notions of spiritualism, give birth to cherubs and unfledged angels. When our party arrived, we were introduced to a staid, matronly-looking lady as Mrs. * * * *; and as we proceeded up the room, to a blooming young creature, a fitting mother for a celestial progeny, as the other Mrs. * * * *, without any worldly or spiritual distinction whatsoever. At first

I thought it a misconception, but enquiry confirmed the fact of there being two mistresses in the same establishment, both with terrestrial habits and duties to perform, which I found afterwards to be the case in other instances, where the parties could lay no claim to any particular saintliness.

On Saturday morning we had a very early levee at our tents, with fresh milk, butter, fowls, and eggs, and a light waggon in attendance, with a side of beef, a carcase of mutton and a veal, all of superior quality; the latter articles for sale professionally, but certainly on most moderate terms, the prime joints not averaging over one penny per pound. The other matters we were forced to accept, and gave to the donors what we could afford of coffee, sugar, and tobacco, which were not to be had in the city for the last two months. In addition to those timely presents, we got all our washing done in the very best style of art. After breakfast we went out returning visits, and were most graciously received in every quarter. The houses are small, principally of brick, built up only as temporary abodes, until the more urgent and important matter of enclosure and cultivation are attended to; but I never saw anything to surpass the ingenuity of arrangement with which they are fitted up, and the scrupulous cleanliness with which they are kept. There were tradesmen and artisans of all descriptions, but no regular stores, or workshops, except forges. Still, from the shoeing of a waggon to the mending of a watch, there was no difficulty experienced in getting it done, as cheap and as well put out of hand as in any other city in America. Notwithstanding the oppressive temperature, they were all hard at work at their trades, and abroad in the fields weeding, moulding, and irrigating; and it certainly speaks volumes for their energy and industry, to see the quantity of land they have fenced in, and the breadth under cultivation, considering the very short time since they had founded the settlement in 1847. There was ample promise of an abundant harvest, in magnificent crops of wheat, maize, potatoes, and every description of garden vegetable, all of which require irrigation, as there is little or no rain in this region, a Salt Lake shower being estimated at a drop to each inhabitant. They have numerous herds of the finest cattle, droves of excellent sheep, with horses and mules enough and to spare, but very few pigs, persons having them being obliged to keep them chained, as the fences are not close enough to prevent them damaging the crops. However, they have legions of superior poultry, so that they live in the most plentiful manner possible. We exchanged and purchased some mules and horses on very favourable terms, knowing we would stand in need of strong teams in crossing the Sierra Nevada.

On Sunday morning early we went to the hot springs, a mile beyond the town, where the authorities were erecting a handsome and commodious building, and had a glorious bath, in sulphur water, at a temperature just as high as could be comfortably endured, drinking, too, of the stream as it gushed from the hill-side in a thick volume, being told it possessed certain medicinal properties of which we all stood in need. The Mormons make a boast of their good health, and attribute it to bathing in those springs, many that I met declaring they came to the valley perfect cripples, and were restored to their health and agility by frequenting them.

After bathing, we dressed in our best attire, and prepared to attend the Mormon service, held for the present in the large space adjoining the intended temple, which is only just above the foundations, but will be a structure of stupendous proportions, and, if finished according to the plan, of surpassing elegance. I went early, and found a rostrum, in front of which there were rows of stools and chairs for the townfolk; those from the country, who arrived in great numbers in light waggons, sitting on chairs, took up their stations in their vehicles in the background, after unharnessing their horses. There was a very large and most respectable congregation; the ladies attired in rich and becoming costume, each with parasols; and I hope I may say, without any imputation of profanity, a more bewitching assemblage of the sex it has rarely been my lot to look upon. Before the religious ceremony commenced, five men mounted the rostrum, who were, as I learned, the weekly committee of inspection. The chairman read his general report of the prospects and proceedings of the colony, and then read a list of those deserving of particular commendation for their superior husbandry, the extent of their fencing, and other improvements, which was followed by the black list, enumerating the idle, slothful, and unimproving portion of the community, who were held up to reprobation, and threatened, in default of certain tasks allotted them being finished at the next visit, to be deprived of their lots, and expelled the community. The reading of these lists produced an evident sensation, and, I am satisfied, stimulate the industrious to extra exertion, and goad the lazy to work in self-defence. This over, another, "the gentleman in black," got up, and, without any form of service or prefatory prayer, read aloud a text from the Book of Mormon, and commenced a sermon, or discourse, "de multis rebus et quibusdam aliis," taking a fling at the various other religions, showing them up by invidious comparison with the creed of the valley. He then pointed out the way to arrive at Mormon sanctity, in which there was nothing objectionable as laid down, and exhorted the congregation, not only as they valued their salvation, but their crops, to so demean themselves, and endeavour to propitiate the favour and indulgence of the Supreme Being, calling to mind that, in the year of righteousness (last year) he sent seagulls, a bird never before known to visit the valley, to devour the crickets, who would otherwise, from their numbers, have annihilated all vegetation.* He then adverted to the barbarous treatment they received at the hands of the Americans, forgetting to avow his charitable forgiveness, and expressed a belief that their avarice would yet induce them to covet their possession in Salt Lake; but he entertained a hope that the Mormons by that time would be strong enough to guard and maintain their rights and independence. He talked of the gold of California, which he said was discovered by Mormon energy, but they freely abandoned it to American cupidity, as they (the Mormons) did not desire such worldly aggrandisement.

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* It is surprising the Mormons, who are, as a class, a most astute and reasoning people, can be gulled and gammoned after this fashion, for seagulls are met all across the plains, and were seen in the valley the first time Colonel Fremont visited it, in 1845, two years before the Mormons thought of settling there.

With this ended the entire ceremony, and began a simultaneous series of greetings and salutations amongst town and country folk, which led to luncheons, and dinners, and all manner of civilities, and tender *tête-à-têtes*, until evening, when another sermon was delivered, which ended the religious duties of the day. I can't say I was much impressed with the sanctity or sincerity of the preachers; nor did it appear to me, from the deportment of the congregation, that any very devotional feeling pervaded them; for with all the affected contempt for worldly wealth and pleasure, they appear to me to pursue the one with as active a zeal, and enjoy the other with as little restraint, as any other sect of professing religionists I have ever become acquainted with. The affairs of church and state here go strictly hand-in-hand, the elders of the church being the magistrates and functionaries in all civil and criminal matters, the framers of the law and chancellors of the exchequer, with whom it is expected that every member of the community will lodge whatever wealth they may acquire beyond their immediate wants, taking treasury notes of acknowledgment. This the law strictly requires, on pain of expulsion and forfeiture; but I have heard several grumble at it; and I understand it has led to numerous secessions, if not from the Mormon faith, at least from the Mormon valley, to get beyond Mormon authority. A Scotchman, fresh from the old country, who, with his sister, lately joined the sect, complained to me of the grievance, stating, that on his arrival he lodged a considerable sum with the treasurer, part of which he lately required to try his fortune in California, but was peremptorily refused, with a rebuke for his lust of gain. "He did na see whar this wud lead to, or how it wad end;" but notwithstanding his strong dialect, I question if he is clean bred Scotch, after so simple an act as he avowed himself guilty of.

There are no written laws amongst them; but trespasses, outrages, and such matters, are taken cognizance of by the elders, and adjudicated on summarily, according to conscience, fines and public flogging being the punishments most in vogue. The authorities have a mint, from which they issue gold coin only; it is plain, but massive, without any alloy. I only saw two amounts, 5 and 10 dollar-pieces, with the amount on one side and the date of issue on the other, without any emblem or device whatsoever. I got every information I believe they possessed relative to the new route to California; but to make assurance doubly sure, I was anxious to procure a guide who had travelled over the line, and engaged a man, with the consent and approval of my party. However, when it came to the ears of the rulers they forbade his leaving; for I believe they are apprehensive that the golden inducements of that rich country might empty the valley of its population if they came to be particularly disseminated; a reason, too, why they deprecate the travelling of emigrants by their city, which they say (and, I believe, with truth) is two hundred miles of a round.

There are, as far as I could learn or judge, about 5000 inhabitants in the town, and 7000 more in the settlements, which extend forty miles each way—north to the Weber, and south towards Utah Lake. The valley, at its greatest width, is not over fifteen miles, and I think seven would be a fair average: its soil is a rich black loam, and is watered, besides the Jordan, which flows through its centre from Utah to Salt Lake, by innumerable springs of good water, and streamlets flowing from the snowy mountains; but it has a naked bleak look, for want of timber, which renders the effects of the sun next thing to unbearable. The city is situated on the south-east end of the lake, about nine miles from its shores; but I think a much more eligible site might have been chosen, where the land would have been equally fertile, the climate fully as salubrious, and timber, which they exclusively burn, much more convenient, for at present they have to bring it from twelve to fifteen miles over a bad road.* The whole neighbourhood swarms with crickets of an enormous size, having a body as large as a mouse, and extraordinary long legs, which enable them to jump inconceivable distances; they do not, however, relish jumping over water; so that by making a small cut round the tillage fields, and letting water into it, those destructive insects are prevented marring industry—a precaution that leaves the husbandman independent of the seagulls.

The evening of Sunday was glorious, after the broad red disk of the sun sunk behind the Utah range. A gentle breeze, wafted off the sparkling surface of the great Salt Lake, came down the valley with a deliciously refreshing effect, inviting abroad the inhabitants, who promenaded about our camp, and came into our tents to pay their farewell visits, as we intended starting in the morning. There was a large proportion of ladies amongst them, who appeared to reciprocate the admiration conceived for them by several members of our company; remaining till an advanced hour, reiterating their last fond words, the golden treasures of California being forgotten for the time in the lures of "metal more attractive;" and it even looked as if the charms of Mormonism, through the spells of its female votaries, was about to thin our ranks—bearing out the dramatist's remark, that, not as other emotions which require time to germinate and mature, "love, like a mushroom, springs up in a night."

sitating us to proceed slowly and with the greatest caution, all spare hands going in advance as pioneers, to endeavour to smooth the way somewhat. There was danger in every revolution of a wheel, and I fully made up my mind to a break-down before we got through. There were many more trying ascents and descents throughout the day, but the principal detention arose in rather an open place, where the seepage and drainage made a swamp that could only be crossed by making an artificial causeway, called, in the States, a corduroy road; so we had to cut down some couple score of slight pine, laying them closely together, and covering them with branches and brush; by which means we managed to get over in fear and trembling. Towards evening, as we thought of camping, some smoke was observed ahead, that we concluded issued from an Indian encampment, but on coming up we found it was caused by a party of Mormons, engaged in burning lime; a scarce and dear article, it seems, in their city.

CHAPTER XIII.

Gratification at meeting a White Man—Doubt our having come the whole way this Season—Exchange Tumblers of Brandy-Punch for Letters of Introduction—Our being mostly Foreigners ensured us a kinder reception—Meet more Mormons—A little Tobacco procures us a great desideratum—Emerge into open air—First View of the Salt Lake Valley—Its appearance—The City of the Mormons—Their Hospitality—Dancing Party—Polygamy and Platonism—Fresh Meat, and in abundance—Any Price or anything for Coffee and Sugar—Neatness and convenience of Mormon Houses—Promise of an abundant Harvest—Wonders worked in so short a Settlement—Great quantity of Stock—Get all Repairs done—Natural hot Baths—The Temple—The Congregation—The Proceedings—The Sermon—Impressions of Mormon Godliness—Civil Government—Mormon Jealousy—The Population in the Valley—Extreme Heat of it—Swarms with Crickets—T. T. L. Visits—Amiability of the Ladies.

I SHALL not soon forget the emotions which possessed me on seeing, so unexpectedly, the face of a strange white man, and they also seemed overcome by feelings of agreeable astonishment as we hastened towards each other with outstretched hands, greeting one another like old acquaintances. They were habited in buckskin suits, and had a weatherbeaten look, that showed they were familiar with exposure. It was a long time before we could convince them we came from the States that year; they thought we must have wintered at Laramie, and come on in the spring; but, amongst other means of assurance, an Independence paper, dated April 7th, removed their scepticism, while it augmented their surgreatly extended at times of melting snows. It is about seventy miles in length, ranging nearly north and south, in conformity to the range of mountains, and is remarkable for its predominance of salt. The whole lake waters seem thoroughly saturated with it, and every evaporation of water leaves salt behind. The rocky shores of the islands are whitened with spray, which leaves salt on everything it touches; and a covering like ice forms over the water, which the waves throw among the rocks. The shores of the lake in the dry season, when the waters recede, and especially on the south side, are whitened with incrustations of fine white salt, the shallow arms of the lake, at the same time, under a slight covering of shining water, presents beds of salt for miles, resembling softened ice, into which horses' feet sink above the fetlocks. Plants and bushes, blown by the wind upon those fields, are entirely encrusted with crystalised salt, more than an inch in thickness; upon this lake of salt the fresh water received, though great in quantity, has no perceptible effect. No fish or animal life of any kind is to be found in it, the *larvæ* on the shore being found to belong to winged insects. A geological examination of the bed and shores of this lake would be of the highest interest. Five gallons of water taken from it, in the month of September, and roughly evaporated, gave fourteen pints of salt, a part of which being subjected to analysis, gave the following proportions:

Chloride of sodium (common salt) . .	97	80	parts.
Chloride of calcium	0	61	"
Chloride of magnesium	0	24	"
Sulphate of soda	0	23	"
Sulphate of lime	1	12	"
	100	00	"

It has not been ever regularly explored or surveyed, and is variously stated to be from seventy to one hundred miles in length; but as far as I could judge, by the time it took me to round its northern extremity, I should be inclined to set it down at eighty, without a single tree or shrub to adorn its bleak shores for the entire length. There are several fertile islands on it, and one very large one, on which the Mormons told me they had as many as seven thousand head of oxen. Bear River and the Weber, which previously receives the waters of the Ogden, empty themselves into it, and although both at that point are large rivers, they produce scarcely any freshening effects, save at the point of disemboguement.

The range of mountains to the eastward of the valley inclined to eastward as we proceeded up it, the land to their base being of the most fertile character, settled by Mormons, who have fine herds, extensive tillage tracts, and comfortable homesteads. I called at many of them, and found them neat and commodious, well but plainly furnished, and the inhabitants civil, communicative, and obliging. The crickets are a serious nuisance, for the ground is alive with them; and they are not only destructive where they have their way, but the effluvia they emit is about as disgusting a sample of scent as any to be met with. Though they burrow in the earth, they spend almost all their time on the surface, and delight in climbing up tall grass and weeds, uttering a grinding chirp that sets one's teeth on edge. They constitute the principal food of the Utah Indian, who eats them raw and roasted, and also make a sort of paste or jam, by broiling them to a cinder, then pounding them very fine, and mixing them with a wild fruit called service berries. A good many of the young Indians are domesticated as herds amongst the Mormons; but the wild ones are kept at arm's length, for they are great thieves, and not otherwise to be depended on. When the settlement was first founded they were excessively troublesome and dangerous, but the Mormons gave them a few grave lessons that improved their behaviour very much.

Our camp this evening was eighteen miles from the city, on the grounds of a man whom I recognised as a visitor when encamped there. He was particularly attentive, placing everything on his premises at our disposal. He had a snug and well-furnished cottage, and seemed to enjoy the greatest domestic beatitude in the society of his wives, spiritual and temporal; never, as he told me, coming in for any squalls, as the ladies expended all their foul air on each other. He had most thriving crops, which he and all the settlers up the valley manage to irrigate, without any trouble, by leading little ducts into their lands from the numerous rivulets that issue from the mountains. They have the advantage of having fine timber close at hand, and bushes scattered about that suffice as a shade for the cattle.

The heat of the weather now became so intense, I was forced to alter the routine of our daily movements by breakfasting before the dawn, starting at the first light, and nooning from eleven till two o'clock, when those who felt so disposed might take a nap, allowing the animals to lie by during the noonday glare, and travelling again, to an advanced hour in the evening, by which we made as long distances with infinitely less distress to both men and mules. Next morning we commenced our new system, though some, who eagerly acquiesced in it the evening before, turned out with a reluctant growl at the early summons. The country, in the early part of the day, was elevated and sandy, with a stock of crickets that made the animals stare with bewilderment, as if they were afraid to go amongst them. We happened to hit a very inviting spot at the nooning hour, and with all our abhorrence of the crickets, were all very soon, with the exception of the day-guard, stretched in unconscious slumbers amongst them. In our evening's drive, the country again resumed its fertile aspect, and was enlivened by the habitations of the scattered settlers; our trail then took a decided bend towards the mountain, in the direction of a belt of timber, which we conjectured skirted the Weber, which river we reached in good time, but were taken aback by seeing, from the lofty overhanging bank, it was both deep and rapid; there was, however, in one place, a low, gravelly island that we were enabled to get to without much trouble, and thence to the other bank was narrow enough to admit of having a permanent rope passed over and made fast at both sides, by which means we pulled across in a direct line, without nearly the delay, or rather of paddling. My waggon was again dismounted, and we were not more than two hours getting everything over in the bed, except the other waggons, which, when empty, we hauled across with ropes. It was near eleven o'clock when we sat to supper, as fagged a lot of gentlemen as there was any use for.

We formed our camp at the end of a large marsh, close to the residence of Mr. Goodyear, a wealthy Mormon, who has an extensive breeding station there for stock of every description, amongst which he had the largest flock of goats I ever saw. His house, offices, stables, &c., &c., formed a large square of handsome and substantial log-buildings, and had every requisite and convenience for such an establishment, which is the last in the line of the northern settlement. He was preparing to drive a large caballada of horses and mules for the Californian market, with which he intended travelling himself in ten or twelve days; could he have started at an earlier period I would have been disposed to await his company, but we expected by that time to be at the source of Humboldt River.

We got a fresh supply of cheese and butter here, and a good mutton for every two waggons; but I rather suspect, when Mr. Goodyear arose the next morning, he was surprised to find we had already started. Though early at work we did not advance much for some hours, the ground over which the trail lay being soft and swampy, with banks of thick jungle that had never before been penetrated, through which we had to force a passage. About eight miles from Mr. Goodyear's we crossed the Ogden, a nice clear stream, which takes its name from the supposed murder of a celebrated trapper, who was said to have been murdered by the Indians and thrown into a hole in the mountain where it has its source. The trail now turned eastward, as if we had to cross the mountains; a supposition we the more readily entertained, as there appeared to be a cañon directly in front of us; but as we got up a pretty elevated slope, it turned again to the north-west, the cause of the sharp turn being, as we could now see, a tule marsh, that would not admit of crossing.

There was a splendid view from here of the Great Salt Lake, the plain, back towards the city, and away to the north-west in the course we were to follow. There was nothing picturesque in the plain itself: but the lofty mountains, with their hoary glistening peaks, piercing the soft blue azure vault of the heavens, whose canopy was unobscured by speck, or cloud, or film, had a soul-elevating effect on us poor pigmies, who crept along their mighty base, like ants beneath the side-wall of a stately edifice. The sun, so early as ten o'clock, was so fearfully hot that I could not bear my hand upon the rifle that was slung from the horn of the saddle; and soon after it became so intense that two men got suddenly ill, and had to be placed in the waggons, suffering, I suppose, from what is called the effects of a sun-stroke. This was by far the most sultry day we had yet, and it happened, unfortunately, that at the nooning hour we were miles remote from shade or water, struggling on in a gasping state for nearly two hours, until we came to a river, made up of mountain torrents, that descended directly from the snowy ridges, hiding its cooling properties in a deep grove of oak and sycamore. Oh, it was a glad sight to see, more welcome at the moment by a million degrees than the richest mine in California: the eager mules could scarcely be restrained from drawing the waggons into it, and those that had their freedom drove down their heads as far as the eyes in the limpid current in their anxiety to swallow it. I admonished my companions as to the bad effects of drinking too freely at first; but they were deaf to every sound, insensible to every fear or feeling but that of parching thirst; drinking as long as the restrained breath would permit, and drinking again and again till they could hold no more. I was somewhat more peremptory with the sick men, to whom I doled it out in small quantities, and with a happy effect. In the morning we expected to make Bear River at the crossing point; but the fatigues of yesterday evening, and the prostrating lassitude brought on by the morning's exposure, induced us to stop where we were.

There was here a genus of gigantic fly, which attacked the horses with a degree of ferocity that I did not conceive could belong to the insect race. It darted at them with a humming whizz, perforating the skin the moment they came in contact with it, as if their lance was inserted by the impetus, in some places letting out a perfect jet of blood. The poor brutes were driven off the feed in amongst the scrub, and some of them, in their pain and terror, ran furiously back the trail, giving us a long walk to recover them, which we would have gladly excused, if possible; but as the cool air of the evening set in those insect-monsters disappeared, and in their stead came the infernal musquito, "to make night horrible." We had, to be sure, discovered a sort of remedy against their attacks, but it was one that, like nauseous medicine, was resorted to with reluctance, and in this instance was peculiarly irksome; for, having expended all the antelope grease, we were forced to have recourse to our nice Mormon butter, spreading it over our warm faces instead of our hot rolls, which, fresh though it undoubtedly was, when reeking in combination with the animal exhalations created within the tents an oleagenous atmosphere that was not at all savoury, and thick enough to be cut with a blunt knife.

The watch throughout the night saw several fires at high elevations on the shelves of the mountains, along which we were travelling, and also on the Utah range opposite, which we knew proceeded from Indians, and looked like signal-fires betokening a gathering; but having heard nothing very unfavourable of the Utah tribe from the Mormons, I felt disposed to place them to the account of ordinary camping-fires: not so, however. The majority of the company insisted they were regular signal tokens answered all around, that showed preparations were making in concert to intercept and attack us. In consequence of my mistake about the Crows I did not combat the opinion, but took such steps as if the danger really impended, more particularly as it did not impede us an iota. We still continued our course along the base of the mountains, but got into a flat broken country, cut up with sloughs and half-dry channels, caused by the seasonal inundations, most of which were soft and sludgy, rendering our path so tortuous, that for two hours we had not advanced over a mile. When we did get on higher ground we could see the line indicating the course of Bear River, which we reached by noon; and on arriving at the edge of the high banks which look down upon the tule marshes that run along it, were astonished at seeing below a waggon with four yoke of oxen, and some white men in the act of returning from the other side in a boat. At first it puzzled us to think who they were, or where they could be from; but as I rode down to make enquiries, I had a most familiar salutation from one of them, who said, "I did not expect you before to-morrow evening." I now saw they were from Salt Lake city, about to establish a ferry, in expectation that other sections of the emigration would follow our track; but their boat was a very small and frail one for that purpose. "How on earth will you be able to live here during the summer months?" I observed, seeing them tearing the musquitoes from their cheeks with both hands. "Well," said the captain of the party, "they are *purty* damn bad here I admit, but when you get over yonder they'll give you particular h—ll." Poor comfort thinks I, as they arose in shoals from the rushes, literally blinding us. I had not before seen them appear in such formidable force of a morning, and I would gladly have submitted to a round of fifty miles rather than undergo the infliction we were doomed to endure while employed in the tedious task of transporting our waggons and luggage, if there was any assurance we would thereby escape. We, however, went at it with that "do or die" determination with which fellows mount the ladders of forlorn hope, and, as at the Weber, we got a fixed line across, though it was double the breadth; but, as the Mormon wherry was small, I had again to dismount my waggon to expedite the operation. The river was two hundred and fifty yards wide at the crossing, and both deep and swift; so much so, that in hauling on the rope it required great caution and management, lest the surging current should boil over and swamp us. We had the misfortune of losing a horse and a mule, drowned in the current, which occupied us three mortal hours before all was over; and I would venture to affirm, that if the great Bear himself, from whom the river derives its patronymic, were of our party, he would by that time have been scratching a sore head. For my part, I would run the risk of another bridge of Lodi, and face the thunders of artillery, sooner than again force the passage of Bear River before those infernal flying cossacks. It turned out, too, precisely as the Mormons said, for they were even worse when we got over, giving us an inkling of a certain tropical place of fashionable resort while reloading and hitching up for a fresh start.

We met at about five miles from the river a narrow deep stream, where we fixed our quarters, and were consoled for the want of wood by the absence of our enemy, there being no reedy margin for them to breed in. In the morning we fancied we had nothing to do but cross straight over—a very illusory idea, as it turned out seven feet deep; nor could we find a practicable spot, insignificant as it appeared, until after a detour of four miles. We here took a more westerly course, receding from the mountains, and entering a country of gloomy grandeur, that looked as if its bleak solitudes had never before been invaded by man. We continued rising hills and sinking into hollows, like a small fleet riding over the swells of the boundless ocean, without any landmark in the horizon, crossing numerous river-beds, whose streams had been drank up by the insatiable sun; and when at length, in the evening, after a long and weary day's journey, without our accustomed noonday rest, we came to water, it was so brackish, it only served to aggravate thirst. There were two streams, within a few yards of each other, running parallel, one of which was near a boiling temperature, while the other was merely softened from the effects of the sun, though, strange to say, they both issued from the same hill-side. In the latter we all bathed, and derived some relief; but the animals were so overcome with thirst they would not feed, and seemed greatly inclined to wander, keeping us in a state of fret and fidget all night. We rather foolishly tried to make coffee, thinking it would disguise the saltish taste; though we should have known that evaporation in boiling would have made it all the stronger and more concentrated; but people, suffering, not unfrequently seek a temporary relief in a remedy which they know is sure to increase and prolong their misery. We all drank freely of this unpalatable beverage, and all, without an exception, suffered sadly throughout the night in consequence.

Shortly after midnight,[*] there being tolerably good light, we set forward, hoping to find fresh water for breakfast. The trail was easy, but at daylight we were no better off than at our start. The men got very much disheartened, and I felt, too, uneasy and distressed, and sent out every horseman in quest of the simple but indispensable necessary, determined, no matter how remote from our route it might be discovered, to go to it. Eight o'clock came, and no horsemen returned; ten o'clock came, yet none were in view, and even the burning meridian arrived without a prospect of relief. My eyeballs got sore from straining, for I never before watched with such nervous anxiety—they were moments of fearful suspense. At length a gleam of hope arose, as I saw two horsemen on the western heights. They must, I thought, surely have found water; but then their slow, dejected gait did not portend glad tidings. I raised my hat, and hailed them aloud. They saw and heard me, yet they neither made a motion nor quickened their pace. The truth was too sadly apparent—it was now approaching the limits of endurance. The teamsters sank listlessly in their saddle, whilst the fierce sun almost crackled in intensity, producing a reeling sensation and a dimness of vision, as if dissolution was supervening, when, like the noise in a dream, I thought I heard the sounds of horses approaching at speed, and making an effort to acquire my consciousness, saw Mr. H——y at hand to announce our merciful deliverance. He told us the water was yet four miles off; but the knowledge that it was car-

CHAPTER XIV.

Effects of the Tender Passion—Early Start—Boiling Springs—The Great Salt Lake—Its Appearance—Analysis of its Waters—Its Peculiarities—Comfort of the Mormon Agriculturists—The Cricket Nuisance—More Wives Spiritual and Temporal—Change our System of Travel—The Weber—Obliged to ferry over our Loads—Mr. Goodyear's Farm—Thick Jungle—The Ogden—Fine View—Heat of the Sun—Water before Gold—Fierce Insects—Signal Fires—Bear River—Surprised to find Men in the act of launching a Boat—Musquitoes—Lose a Horse and Mule in the Ferry—Our Campground—Take a more Westerly Course—Scarcity of Fresh Water—Salt Streams Hot and Cold side by side—Send out Scouts to look for Water—Their protracted Absence—Our Sufferings—Come to Water at last—Shoot an Indian—Lamentable Necessity for such Rigour—Last View of the Great Salt Lake—The Broad-axe Guard—Desolation and Solitude.

THOUGH early astir next morning, there were those in the city whose wakeful eyelids anticipated the sun; and lest there should be a repetition of the melodramatic performances of yesterday evening, I got the waggons into motion at once, and moved off from the isolated metropolis of the Latter-Day Saints, deeply impressed with gratitude for their kindness and hospitality, with admiration for their energy and industry, but with no very elevated respect for their creed, or the ethical discipline of their social institutions. Our road passed along by the hot springs, where we had a regimental lavabo, performed in double quick. About four miles beyond these there are boiling springs with the same mineral properties, but at a temperature that would answer for culinary purposes—a fact tested by one of our men, that he might be able to indulge in the boast hereafter, by putting in two eggs, which were cooked to a bubble in the usual time—three minutes by the sand-glass. There is a small river flowing from them, over which there is a bridge—for though it is shoal enough to drive through with ease, it would scald the animals if they went into it. Some of the loose ones that ran precipitately in turned quickly back, rushing with frightened haste over the bridge lest it should fall and let them into it again.

Here, with some others, I turned down to visit the lake, but could not well get as far as its waters, from the combined incrustations of muriate and carbonate of soda that covered the flat shores for a great distance from the edge, through which the horses sank nearly knee deep, and could not be induced to proceed. As the wind came off the lake it carried with it a mineral stench arising from the stagnant water close along the brink, which was offensive to the utmost degree; and, although the breeze was a brisk one, it scarcely ruffled the surface of the sluggish lake, the water, from its great specific gravity, being difficult to disturb, for, carrying in solution its full complement of salt, it requires a storm to set it in anything like commotion. Colonel Fremont, who analysed it, gives the following description and result:

"The Great Salt Lake has a very irregular outline, evening a sheet of water appeared to the south, that was at first mistaken for mirage, but I found it by the glass to be the northernmost extremity of the great Salt Lake, now seen for the last time. We were well off for water all day, and camped in a flat, where we got a drink of the purest distillation. Here, together with bunch grass, there was a shrub like the savine plant mixed up with the artemesia, on which the horses browsed freely, which I afterwards learned is called greasewood. I kept the guard at its additional strength to-night, lest the Utahs should come to avenge the death of their fallen comrade, but the stillness of night did not suffer the slightest interruption.

The next day the scene of dreary desolation was broken by a chain of hills, running in detached and irregular lines from north-east to south-west; which were well timbered with cedar, aspen, and a large bushy shrub, bearing a red berry, the name of which I could not ascertain. We endeavoured to force our way through a valley that lay directly in the line we wanted to go, and again called out the broad-axe guard; however, after cutting a path for upwards of two miles, we met sage of such prodigious growth, and in such close contact, we were compelled to desist, and retrace our steps to where we diverged from the trail, which led us in an oblique line up the side of the hills, crossing a grassy dell, where we halted till noon. In getting round to the other side, several short broken ranges of distant mountains came within view, all tending north and south, in conformity with the system of the great interior basin.

I did not before see so appalling a picture of awful desolation and utter solitude as that presented by the barren waste intervening betwixt the hills on which we were, and the mountains to the west. It had a scorched and withered aspect, that repulsed the eye and sickened the spirit, looking the territory exclusively created for the reptiles of animated nature, and forbidden to the footsteps of man. We descended alongside a small turbid stream, and followed its course till the hour of rest arrived: all the distance the surface of the arid plain was encrusted with white saline efflorescences, and yet the water, as far as we could judge, was wholly free from any impregnation of it.

CHAPTER XV.

The Digger Indians—Their Appearance, Character, Habits, and Customs—Their extent of Territory—Their Practices towards Emigrants—Desert Country—The toll of the Animals—The 4th of July—Festival in the Wilderness—Occurrences of the Night—Fine Feed—Country again improves—Meet the Fort Hall Trail—Picturesque Scenery—Shoot a Black-tailed Deer—Different Treatment of Venison in those Hills from Ludgate-hill—Our Friend the Indian Dreader in fear—Goose Creek—The Wild Excitement—The Blank Disappointment—"All is not gold that glitters"—True Philosophy make our Disappointment Food for Fun—Further Researches—Volcanic indications—Narrow Pass—No Gold—Rugged Defile—Waggon Accident—"Necessity the Mother of Invention"—Sage Hens and Digger Indians—Their Flight—Apprehension of having gone astray—Snow-capped Mountains to cross—Infamous Road—Giddy Precipice—The Humboldt River—Strange Appearance of the Land near its head waters—Colonel Fremont's Description of the Humboldt River.

WE were now entering the confines of the Digger Indian territory, the most degraded and debased of all the Indian race, the refuse and dregs of savage society, who receive into brotherhood every outcast from all the other tribes, that fly from the vengeance their crimes have earned for them. In natural conformation the Digger Indian is very few degrees removed from the orang-outang; not much above its stature, having the same compressed physiognomy, a low forehead, with little or no space between the eyebrows and roots of the hair. He is altogether devoid of resources, possessing little beyond the instinctive cunning of the monkey, without a scintilla of energy to procure either good food or raiment. They exist, as their name denotes, on roots dug from the earth, vermin, and crickets, although, with ordinary exertion, they could kill sufficient deer, antelope, and mountain sheep for sustentation, the skins of which would afford them a partial covering; but such is their inherent sloth, they have been known to die of absolute inanition rather than make an effort to obtain food. The females correspond in looks and habits with those "lords of the creation," living in holes and dens, that cannot be dignified by the title of huts or wigwams, and drag out a miserable existence in a state of nature, amidst the most loathsome and disgusting squalor. Their territory covers a great, but, for the most part, barren expanse, extending over the Sierra Nevada into the northern extremity of Alta California. They are a terrible pest and nuisance to travellers and emigrants, for, without aspiring to the chivalry of robbers, they are content to fire their arrows at night amongst the animals, hoping to wound or cripple some, so that they will have to be left behind, when they become their prey. When going into their country, emigrants should make it a rule never to camp near shrubs or bushes, under cover of which they will be certain to crawl within range of the animals, and perhaps effect their purpose without being discovered, as no noise follows the discharge of their arrows, some of which may wound a man as well. Humboldt River and the head of the Sacramento are the places where they are most numerous; but they are fast dwindling in numbers, for trappers and travellers shoot them down without hesitation or remorse wherever they meet them.

Next day the sun was oppressively hot, and we toiled through sage and sand without meeting an oasis in this cheerless region, while the animals were sadly persecuted by a large gnat, whose sting inflicted severe pain, judging from the manner in which the poor brutes winced. We had plenty of water, which, running without shade through those hot lands, was at a blood heat, and consequently not very agreeable to drink while sweltering ourselves in the solar fire. Two of the men, who rode forward in the morning, returned at four o'clock, with intelligence that there was good camping-ground and feed about nine miles ahead, where we saw some hills rising from the plain; it was rather far, if it could have been avoided. I agreed, however, with myself to make it up to the animals by a later morning's start than usual. From the nature of the road, it was sundown when we arrived at our quarters, which fully bore out the representation given of them.

This evening happening to be the 3rd of July, the eve of the anniversary of American independence, our few Yankee companions expressed a desire of celebrating its advent, if we Britishers had no objection. On receiving an assurance to that effect, they concocted a bucket of capital punch, and as soon as twelve o'clock came round, those patriotic voyageurs hailed the festival with a peppery salvo of revolvers and rifles, and then sought to sap our loyalty through the insinuating agency of whisky-toddy, our boisterous hilarity imposing a new and unusual task on the echoes, in the neat and appropriate sentiments, songs, and oratorical displays, wherein we were so desirous of saying complimentary things of each other's country, that it would have required an accurate judgment to discriminate betwixt John Bull and Jonathan, "barrin'," as Paddy would say, "the trifle of snuffle." But while wetting our whistles, and rounding our periods, the reflection of a light at a distance on the hills directed our attention, and some of the lads being "a wee bit sprung," insisted on going off to ascertain the cause. They were not over a half hour gone, when we heard a great shout—not of fear, but of fun—and could distinctly see the forms of our friends standing on a rock, in the glare of the fire that burned below. It seems they came unawares on a small encampment of Diggers, stretched round a large sage-bush fire, with a few squaws and pappooses; breaking in upon their slumbers with a wild hurra! that make the poor savages jump up in terror, and run off, leaving their interesting babies in the hands of the alarmists, who, instead of "slaughtering the innocents," caught up the little dusky pusky beauties in their arms, and performed a set of nursery gymnastics that must have astonished their weak nerves, from the great heights to which they tossed them, to the tunes of "Yankee Doodle" and "God save the Queen," to the great affright, no doubt, of their unhappy parents, who, I suppose, regarded the orgies as a preliminary step to the roasting and devouring of their tender veals.

The morning star made its appearance before we turned in; but this I did not so much mind, as it was agreed not to start until the afternoon. Our mules got a regular blow out, and went to work when called on with a contented acquiescence, that showed they appreciated the arrangement. The evening's jaunt, still over the regions of sage and sand, brought us to a fine range of green hills, on the side of which we saw several antelope that were too fleet and watchful for our marksmen; the trail leading into a grassy ravine, wooded with gnarled cedar, that was twisted into most fantastic shapes by the rude storms that sweep through this gap in the winter seasons, we had a cool, delicious spring to slake our thirst at, and not an unneighbourly insect to interrupt our enjoyments or repose. On getting through this the next morning, we struck the trail from Fort Hall, which, winding down a defile in a southerly trend, merged into ours just on the verge of a descent into an open valley, two miles in width, that separated us from another chain of hills higher than those we were leaving, whose summit lines were peaky, and more of the mountain character; they were also more thickly wooded, and though not elevated enough to reach the regions of snow, streamed with laughing, bubbling rivulets, that leaped wantonly down their sides from amidst clumps of aspen and cedar, ministering to the rich deep emerald hue of the valley, but at the same time making it so springy that our wheels cut into the soil up to the axles, so that we could not get through until we lightened the waggons, dismounting and packing whatever we could on the saddle-horses, and even then not without tremendous exertion.

As we got into the hills the scenery became very picturesque, being delightfully wooded and broken into cliffs and lovely vistas, that often arrested us to gaze down those sequestered avenues of nature, across which we could see the coy black-tailed deer bounding into the break. We shot one of those fine animals in the course of the day, but had not sufficient patience to allow it the probation which Ludgate-hill venison is accorded by that veteran deer-stalker, Mr. Rich, for we had some of it hissing on the coals in a few hours after. We saw many signs of the Digger inhabitants, but were not favoured with a sight of any, though, from the character we got of them at Salt Lake, our friend D——, who still fondly cherished his horror of the children of the desert, spurred past every close grove as if he thought the trees would fall upon him, making it appear that in those particular places he had a misunderstanding with his horse. It took us about four hours to tread the mazes of those hills, from which we descended into the vale where Goose Creek has its rise, while all around, north, south, east, and west, were a chaotic crowd of hills and mountains, thrown up in a tumult of confusion, like incidents and personages in the last chapter of a tedious novel.

We heard great things of Goose Creek, both at Fort Bridge and Salt Lake, and were resolved to search for some of the golden eggs, even though it caused us a delay of a few days. The creek widened as we travelled down it in a southerly course, receiving the offerings of little tributaries at every perch; the valley, too, opened somewhat, and spread out a carpet for our reception, with clover, rich grasses, and sweet-scented flowers. Not many moments after we stopped I was startled by a loud huzza, soon followed by a multitude of huzzas, down at the river, which soon brought us all to the brink, without being able to get any other explanation of the unusual uproar but a repetition of huzzas and one cheer more for Goose Creek. "What under heaven do you mean?" I at length exclaimed. "Mean!" said he (huzza!)—"mean did you say? (huzza!)—why, nothing short of the gold itself (one cheer more for Goose Creek); look at it here on the bottom, and give us (another cheer for old Goose Creek)." I went forward amidst the uproar, and was well-nigh betrayed into a huzza on looking into the limpid water, seeing the bottom speckled with shining yellow particles, the very image of gold. "But all is not gold that glistens," nor was it gold that glistened in the sands of Goose Creek, it being only deceptive mica that called forth the boisterous enthusiasm of my friends. I fancy I see at this moment their elongated jaws when the fact was ascertained; and if I could have taken a daguerreotype of the group, I know it would give the reader the most amusing page in the book; but, though sad the disappointment, it afforded fine food for fun, and kept us joking all the evening, with every now and then an ironical cheer for Goose Creek, almost as trying to the patience of the "ganders" (as they were christened) as the stings of the musquito itself.

The mistake, however, did not deter us from making other researches amongst the volcanic debris with which the hill-sides and ravines were strewed, without having our industry rewarded by a single grain.

About a mile from our camp the river cañoned at a right angle through a high hill, the sides of which you would think impended much beyond the perpendicular, leaving a side-path of rather a ticklish width to get through. On from this pass we got into an oval-shaped plain, which we crossed longitudinally together with the creek, and entered another defile, more roomy than the last, and volcanic throughout, cliffs thrown up in irregular strata and covered with scoria and vitreous gravel. During our nooning spell all hands turned to with picks, shovels, and wash-basins, in the various gulches and ravines, and worked with great assiduity for two hours, without finding a spec, or meeting any of the concomitant symptoms of its existence, which satisfied us it would be a sheer waste of time to remain exploring in Goose Creek. We accordingly hitched up and continued our journey, still confined in the jaws of the defile, which became more and more rugged as we advanced, the torn-up beds of mountain torrents intersecting our narrow path in many places, shaking our waggons so dreadfully I expected at each jolt to hear an axletree snap, or see a wheel shivered; nor was it long until, in passing over a ledge of shelving rock, one of the wheel mules slipped, and falling broadside on the pole, snapped it across where it enters the hounds. Next after breaking a wheel this was the worst accident that could happen, as the fracture occurred at a place that did not admit of splicing: and the taking asunder of the hounds to get a new one in, together with the fitting of the irons, made it a troublesome occurrence, there being no one amongst the party who had mechanical gifts or experience. But few men know what they can do till they try, and many thousands and hundreds of thousands have gone unnoticed and in poverty to their graves whose latent genius would have earned them wealth and distinction, if they had only met with any lucky accident of development. We all set to work, novices as we were, some to look after a suitable tree, some dismounting the irons from the broken pole, and others taking out the hounds. All was ready when the men returned with a nice length of white oak, which was soon lined, shaped, and rough fitted, plainly but firmly, with the irons, and fixed in its place in an inconceivably short space of time, and fitted so truly that the waggon, as it is termed, followed most accurately, making us all wonder at our own expertness.

We got out of the glen soon after, and continued our course, never anticipating any difficulty about finding a camping-ground; but it was deep twilight ere we met one, and then a very indifferent one, with bad water and worse grass, amidst groves of the odious artemesia, alive with lizards and sand-ticks.

The same character of frightful barrenness marked the country through which we passed the following day; neither flower, nor shrub, nor any indication of soil that would give promise that the energy of man would ever succeed in supplanting those rank weeds of nature by the smiling productions of husbandry. As our loose mules were wandering through those bushes, looking for tufts of bunch-grass, they flushed a pack of sage-hens, which, after a short flight, were marked down.

We hastily loaded our guns with suitable shot, and in walking up to spring them again, I saw the bushes before me shaking, as if some good sized animals were stealing away, which caused me to quicken my pace to a smart double-quick, when I saw the dark back of something going from me. Without more ado, or taking any time to ascertain what it was, I fired, and, to my great surprise, up started a Digger Indian with a howl, and in an instant after fifteen or twenty others, all running like furies, and dropping their bows and arrows to facilitate their flight. We shouted as if in pursuit, and fired a few shots over their heads, which made them bound in an extraordinary and amusing manner, never slackening their speed until they vanished over the hill-side. They were evidently ensconced in cover, watching for a favourable opportunity, when we luckily discovered them, tickling their bustles with heavy duck-shot, but losing our other game by the occurrence.

Soon after a river appeared to the southward, which we concluded was Goose Creek, but it considerably puzzled us, finding it on our left hand. We approached it to noon, and, to our still greater surprise, found it running in an easterly course. As it was an affluent of the Humboldt, I began to fear we had overrun the source of that river, which was to be our great guide for three hundred miles; so, while the others were nooning, I took one of the idle mules and rode off to a chain of hills about five miles distant, through which it seemed to run. There I had the gratification of finding that, after passing them, it took a southerly tainly there, and the slight relief we got from his canteen, revived and strengthened us.

It was past three o'clock when the waggons got up—rather a fashionable hour for breakfast; and although the water was cool and clear, it was not wholly free from a saline flavour; but from the fatigues and privations of the morning, and those of the previous night, it was arranged not to go any further for the day. About a mile below the camp, where the stream meandered through a level patch of land, we found excellent feed, a little inconvenient, it is true, for the guard, but the grass was too tempting to let that consideration weigh. Shortly after our meal was over, we were waited upon by ten visitors of the Utah tribe, dressed in buckskin suits, and well mounted. They had only a few skins for barter, and some of that compound I described before, made of powdered crickets and service berries, in small cakes baked in the sun. There were a couple of the horses I would have dealt for, but they were not disposed to part with them at all. One of them spoke and understood a little English, from the frequency of his visits to the Mormon city, and from him I sought some information as to the route to Humboldt River, of which he was entirely ignorant, as he said, "him lib here;" pointing away to the south-west.

As our animals were such a distance from the camp, and those gentlemen in the neighbourhood, it occurred to me it would be a prudent arrangement to strengthen our guard; so at the next change I got my own tent carried down, and added two to each watch till morning. Towards the termination of the first one, the report of two shots announced that there were strangers about; and on going out I saw, in the moonlight, the men gathered round an object that proved to be one of our afternoon visitors, who, with others, in attempting to steal off a horse, received a rifle-ball in the knee-joint, which shattered and dislocated it in a shocking manner, the wound bleeding profusely. I made an effort to stop it, by applying a silk handkerchief as a tourniquet; but it produced little or no effect, though we twisted it with all our might with an iron ramrod, the poor Utah bearing it without a move or moan. I then sent up to the camp for some brandy, which I gave him diluted with water; but he sunk rapidly, and in an hour afterwards yielded up the ghost without a murmur. We all took a great interest in him, seeing him bear his misfortune so heroically. There was not one amongst us that would not have gladly given up the horse to ensure his recovery; but it is absolutely necessary to guard your animals with the greatest rigour, else you will in the end be deprived of the means of prosecuting your journey, and left to perish miserably in the wilderness.

Next morning we launched out once more upon desert of sage and sand, through which we travelled all the day, the bushes being so close and strong in many places as to call all our axes into requisition. It was very severe work on the mules, whose legs and bellies got scratched and torn by the stumps, which also arrested the wheels every moment. About five o'clock in the bend, and at a distance of a few miles sloped into a north-westerly course, which satisfied me we were still all right, though apparently on the wrong side; a misapprehension that was also removed, after we again got in motion, by crossing it at the bend where it took its easterly turn.

We were all the morning drawing close to a range of lofty mountains, composed of black basalt, conforming to the general law of the great basin, and lying north and south; many of their peaks were snow-capped, and smoke issued from several high ledges, whence the Diggers might look down and watch us. Our trail went in a line to the base, and then ascended one of the hips, winding like a white tread till it disappeared round a knuckle at a great elevation. It was by far the roughest track we had yet met with, and was, in great part, made up of the bed of a mountain torrent, so narrow in many places that the waggon-wheels were working upon the edges, and the mules endeavouring to pull below in the bottom. Being too much for a single team to master, we only took up two waggons at a time, using the teams of the four; and in getting round the projection took all out but the wheel-span, as it required the greatest caution and precision in driving, there not being six inches to spare from the edge of a dizzy precipice fully 1000 feet deep: it was a nerve-testing spot, and only one teamster was game to sit in the saddle, who piloted all in safety over the dangerous place. We had this grinning precipice disagreeably contiguous for more than a mile, till we got to the western side of the range, from whence the valley of the Humboldt lay exposed to view, and, contrary to our expectations, was perfectly identical with the barren wastes we had lately been travelling over, except a narrow margin that runs along it like a shelf, marking, I should suppose, the high-water line when the river is augmented by the thaws from the adjacent mountains. Its course was perceptibly marked at a little distance down the valley by dense lines of willows.

It was high time for camping when we got down on the plain, which was pitted over for miles like a tan-yard, with oblong holes, some of which were very deep, of a remarkable appearance, looking as if they were formed by art, they were so equally spread and so uniformly shaped. All were deep and half-filled with stagnant water. As the dusk had set it, we did not choose to run any risk in getting to the river, but pitched our tents amongst them, and picked up as many withered willows as boiled our coffee. I may say we were now at the head waters of that remarkable river, though not exactly at its source, which consists of two inconsiderable little streams in the mountains from which we just descended. Colonel Fremont describes it as follows in his "Geographical Memoir of Upper California," written by order of the U. S. Senate, as a key to his map, published in 1848, the first and only correct one of those regions:

"One of the most considerable rivers in the interior of the Great Basin is that called on the map Humboldt River, so called as a small mark of respect to the 'Nestor of scientific travellers,' who has done so much to illustrate North American geography without leaving his name on any of its remarkable features. It is a river long known to hunters, and sometimes sketched on maps under the name of Mary's River; but now, for the first time, laid down with any precision. It is a very peculiar stream, and has many of the characteristics of an Asiatic river—the Indus, for example, though twice as long—rising in the mountains, and losing itself in a lake of its own, after a long and solitary course. It rises in two streams in the mountains west of the Great Salt Lake, which unite after some fifty miles, and bear westerly along the northern side of the Great Basin towards the Great Sierra Nevada, which it is destined never to reach, much less to pass. The mountains in which it rises are handsome in their outline, capped with snow the greater part of the year, clothed in places with grass and wood, and abundant in water. The stream is a narrow line, with few affluents, losing by absorption and evaporation as it goes, and terminating in a marshy lake, with low shores, fringed with bulrushes, and whitened with saline incrustations. It has a moderate current, from two to six feet deep, in the dry seasons, and probably not fordable anywhere below the junction of the forks. During the time of the melting snows, when both lake and river are considerably enlarged, the country through which it passes (except its immediate valley or border) is a dry sandy plain, without wood, grass, or arable soil, from about 4700 feet at the forks to 4200 feet at the lake, above the level of the sea, winding amongst broken ranges of mountains, and varying from a few miles to twenty in breadth. Its own immediate valley along the banks is a rich alluvion, beautifully covered with blue grass, herd grass, clover, and other nutritious grasses, and its course is marked through the plain by a line of willows and cotton-wood trees (the latter I did not see), serving for fuel. The Indians in the fall set fire to the grass, and destroy all trees, except in low ground near the river. The river possesses that which in the progress of events may give it both value and fame. It lies on the only line of travel to California, running nearly east and west; it furnishes a level, unobstructed road for nearly three hundred miles, and a continuous supply of the indispensable articles of water, wood, and grass. Its head is towards the Great Salt Lake, and consequently towards the Mormon settlement, which must become a point in the emigration to California and Lower Columbia. Its termination is within fifty miles of the Sierra Nevada. These properties give to this river a prospective value in future communications with the Pacific Ocean."

CHAPTER XVI.

Short Cut—Indian Surprise—My Retreat and Wound—The termination o the Chase—Motives of the Attack—The Dust Nuisance—A hungry Digger—His Gastronomic Performance—Its Effect—Travelling in the Clouds—Heat of the Ground—Novel Appearance of the Country—Mountain Pass—Night Travelling in the Wilderness—Sublime Scenery—Moonlight—Sunrise—Opthalmia and Cracked Lips—The Sun, and its reflective Heat—The Water gets ill-tasted—Grand Canon—State of the Animals and our Lips—Wild Currants—Dogged by the Indians—Give them a Surprise—Amusing Retreat of the Diggers—Good Camping-Ground—Serious Difficulties of the Route—Deep Dust and intense Heat—Proposition—Lighten our Loads—Leave our Goods upon the Desert—Reduce the Burdens to seven hundred-weight per Waggon—Effects of the hot Sand on our Waggon-wheels—Green Goggles and Veils in request—More Currants—My Wound becomes very angry—Appoint a Deputy—Diverting Indian Water-hunt.

In the morning we had two hours twisting and turning before we got to the bank of the river, though for a day's travel it was scarcely important enough to be dignified by the title of river; but, once there, the path was tolerably smooth and level. After travelling down it for an hour it approximated, and ran parallel with, a high ridge of ground, which stretched away a long distance to the southward, and, turning round its point, ran up on the other side right opposite to that from which we set out. As soon as I ascertained this, by riding up the rise, I called to the waggons to halt until I selected an easy place to get them over, which would be a saving of ten miles at least, and one accomplished without much difficulty, as all crossed over the hill with perfect ease. Feeling desirous that those emigrants behind should be made aware of the short cut—for even ten miles in so serious a journey is a matter of some moment—I got a bit of thin board, on which I pasted a piece of paper containing the requisite notification, and having nailed it to a short pole, went back to stick it up where we turned from the trail, taking with me a light spade to sink the hole, and rather imprudently leaving all my arms behind me. While thus engaged, I saw my horse, whom I had staked close by, raise his head / suddenly with his ears pricked forward, and, turning round to ascertain the cause, discovered six mounted Indians coming down upon me full split, urging their horses more and more as soon as they saw I observed them, betraying by their anxiety and haste some sinister intention.

I was, as I said, wholly unarmed, the spade being rather an encumbrance than a weapon; so I saw my only chance of escape was in flight, and therefore, pulling up the stake in all haste, sprang upon my horse to run for it. Had I open ground I would not have feared the result; but amongst large bushes their horses, from custom, could easily outrun mine. After the first burst I looked round, and saw they were fast gaining upon me; and just as I gained the summit of the rise two arrows whizzed close past me, a third taking effect in the thigh, high up near the hip. I was now within view of the waggons, but they were a long way off;

nevertheless, putting my finger in my mouth, I gave a shrill whistle, which it was clear did not reach them; then, letting go the spade, and taking a good hold of my horse by the head, I crammed in the spurs, rousing him to his utmost speed, and ventured to take another look round on my pursuers, to make a flying calculation of my remaining chances; but, lo! and behold, pursuers there were none—not an Indian within view, or any object I could magnify into the semblance of a foe. What could it have been? Was it a day-dream, or a vision, or the illusion of mirage? Yes, thought I, it must certainly have been the effects of that strange, deceptive phenomenon, becoming almost reconciled to the conviction, when I felt a prick of pain in my thigh which reminded me of the arrow that was sticking there—a circumstance that at once put an end to my preternatural speculations; for I never heard it alleged, by the most imaginative travellers, that those desert phantoms, Fata Morganas, are in the habit of shooting real *bonâ fide* arrows: they may terrify the senses, but they never go the length of wounding the body. It was clear, therefore, that it was flesh and blood Indians that chased me, who, as soon as they ascended the rise, and got a glance of the waggons, hauled off.

The arrow had only a shallow hold, and was not very painful; the only thing that gave me any uneasiness being the dread that the barb might have been poisoned. As soon as I came up with the waggons I got one of my companions to take it out; but he broke off the point in the attempt, which subjected me to much more annoyance than the wound, for he had to make a large slit in the flesh before he could succeed in extricating it. It bled freely, which was a good thing in case of poison; and after washing it thoroughly, first with water and then with spirits, I bandaged it up and let it take its chance.

It is not usual with the Diggers to make an attack of such a nature, but I suppose they were prompted by motives of revenge for the peppering I gave one of them the day before, when following the sage-hens.

We had fine feed at noon close along the river banks; but although the road was level, it was most disagreeable, from the clouds of hot dust with which we were perpetually enveloped. It was not sand, but a fine impalpable powder, as light as ashes, that covered the trail; and, being perfectly imponderous, was raised up in clouds from the trampling of the animals, covering everything and everybody, actually choking the nostrils of the mules and horses, who appeared to suffer seriously from it, and giving some amongst us with susceptible lungs very tearing coughs. As soon as the cloud subsided, after stopping, we saw a squalid-looking Digger seated on the edge of the bank. I need not say that the first impulse was to blow him into the river; and, had he moved, such, I believe, would have been his fate; but he neither budged nor appeared in the least disconcerted. On the contrary, he "grinned most horribly" a species of smile, and welcomed us with a sort of bowing salutation. I showed him the arrow, and where I was wounded, making signs to him to warn his tribe to keep clear of us, as we were resolved to shoot them without mercy on every occasion. When taking our lunch, he looked wistfully at us, and at length made signs that he was very empty and hungry, when one of the men threw him a biscuit, and another a cut of bacon, which he swallowed with such greedy voracity as to surprise us. We then gave him more and more, but all disappeared with the same unsatiable rapidity as if his abdomen was a bottomless bag that could never be filled. This stimulated our curiosity, and we continued giving him, just to see the full extent to which he could go. After making a clean finish of all the cooked meat, we gave him a greasy wedge off a raw flitch of bacon, which he attacked with unflagging appetite; but before he fully mastered it, he showed symptoms of choke, and sank back in a kind of swoon, his stomach braced out with a pregnant rotundity that threatened an explosion, as he moaned and rolled as in apparent agony. I began to fear the unfortunate creature had eaten himself to death, and that we had wasted a great quantity of food in a most reprehensible manner. However, before we were ready for a fresh start he recovered a little, and after a great effort managed to get on his legs, and toddled off in a slow, but awkward gait, sitting down every fifty or eighty yards, like a fellow resting under a heavy load.

We moved off in a cloud, which rolled faithfully along with us the entire evening, and at times was so impenetrable it was next thing to impossible to see our way, coming at every second waggon length jam into a big sage-bush, and the heads of the mules in the rear coming bump against the obstructed waggon. We followed the river through an open cañon, in a low range of detached mountains, and camped on the other side, our couches not requiring the precaution of warming-pans, for the ground was almost hot enough to bake biscuit.

Next morning we got into a flat valley, shaped like a Y, coated all over with a thin saline incrustation, and all the bushes frosted with a hoar-powder, that gave it exactly the appearance of deep winter drapery, while the sun was toasting everything to a cinder. When we came to the tail of the valley the river left us in a southerly sweep, and cañoned through the mountains in a very narrow precipitous channel, our trail slanting northerly over the brow. We took our nooning spell before we commenced the ascent, and prepared a lot of logs to key or prop the wheels at the rests. Though the range was steep it looked narrow, so that we calculated we could easily accomplish the crossing in the evening, lightening as much as we could by packing; nevertheless, it was a task of infinite toil to both man and beast to gain the top of the first elevation; on attaining which, far from having surmounted all difficulties, we had to slide down with ropes and double-locks into a rocky defile, where we kept jumbling and jolting until dark, and took two hours of moonlight before we got to the end of it, where we were met by another steep and rugged ascent.

I would have been inclined to stop here till daylight if there was any grass or brambles on which the animals could browse; but there was nothing save bare rocks and stones. It was on the borders of twelve o'clock when we got to the top of the other ridge, the moon shining out with glorious effulgence in the midst of a starry host that studded the clear blue firmament, forming a radiant canopy, not frequently beheld along the humid shores of the Atlantic, while its rays were reflected by the white crystal-covered plain below that lay spread out like the vast winding-sheet of a dead world at the base of the lofty peaks, which cast their sombre shadows across the crooked river, resembling the mighty mausoleums of an extinct race of giants, standing in silence and solitude in this unfrequented region, making a truly sublime scene, mellowed by the time and the circumstances under which it was surveyed. It took us some time to crawl down the mountain hips, the beams of the morning sun shedding their light beyond the range we had just crossed, before we formed our camp; and as we reposed in the shadow at its base, it was a gorgeous spectacle to look out upon the sparkling desert, as it became gradually tinged with the rich red hues of morning, deepening momentarily in colour, until it seemed at length to dissolve into an ocean of liquid vermilion.

We had a late breakfast this morning, and did not get "a rollin'" until nine o'clock. There was no novelty in the appearance of the country—sterile and barren as usual, and the dust as smothering, several of our company showing symptoms of opthalmia, and all suffering from hacked lips. Little ulcers were also observable in some of the horses' noses, which alarmed me very seriously lest they should become aggravated into glanders; but I found they healed up by being frequently washed in a weak solution of alum. Portions of the plain we crossed to-day were composed of an earth almost as white as chalk, and baked so hard that neither the horses' hoofs nor the waggon-wheels made the slightest indentation on it. But the beams of the burning sun were reflected from its polished surface with a roasting intensity that almost dried up the sources of existence, for what with a fire above and a red heat below, without a zephyr to cool the fevered lungs, or temper down the blood in its arterial manufacture, I feared some would surely sink under it. What would we not give for a wide-spreading lime to nestle for a little within its delicious shade; but there was not a twig where we nooned on the river bank, while, to add to our miseries, we now detected an acrid taste in the water, which smarted our cracked lips most terribly, it being evidently strongly impregnated with alkali.

We derived very little benefit or enjoyment from our rest, and had another sharp evening's task before us, in the crossing of another bench of mountains, which were not very elevated; but what they lacked in height they made up in breadth and other difficulties, for the ravine through which the pass lay was filled with loose sand, in which the wheels sank eighteen inches. The river cañoned here again in a southerly direction, and so closely to us I had the curiosity to visit it. There was a space at each edge where it first entered the mountain, but as it got towards the centre it washed the very walls of the precipice on each side, the aperture above looking like a mere slit, not large enough to let down sufficient light, for the chasm through which the waters hurried was as dark as Erebus within. We got to our camping-ground this evening in better time, but both men and animals were enervated and weakened by the sultriness of the day, and all as white as millers from the fine dust. Those complaining of sore eyes were now very bad, as well as those with delicate lungs, and our lips, I must say, were in a very unkissable condition. The river water was so bad this evening, that, wearied as we were we dug a well, into which the water came plentifully through a porous soil; but of the two it tasted worse than the other, being even very disagreeably perceptible in coffee, and only usable cold with any relish by an admixture of cream of tartar.

Next day we travelled almost without deviation close by the river bank, but could in many places have made a more direct course than by following its bends, only that the artemesia was altogether impenetrable. In spots during the day we met bushes of wild currant, small and tart, and from that very constituent, being a good anti-scorbutic, I recommended each mess to pull as many as would make a good pie, which we found palatable as well as wholesome. A lot of Indians kept dogging us all the morning, and the river being deeply fringed with willows, it was clear they purposed following us till evening, to see and get a shot at our stock; but we managed to disperse them in great alarm, by leaving six men in a dry gully at a point of the river round which we went, taking a southerly slant, knowing that, if bent on mischief, they would pass very close to this angle. About half a mile further on six more men dropped down quietly in the tall sage, the waggons and horsemen going on without any pause. Just as we anticipated, the Diggers, about thirty strong, shaved the point, without perceiving the men in their rear, and as soon as they got midway betwixt both parties, each arose, charging them at a run, shouting and roaring lustily, and firing a few shots over their heads. Oh, it was a scene worth going a distance—but not the whole distance—to see the frightened savages running as if their lives were at stake; jumping frantically in the air at each report, and clapping their hands on the spot, in anything but a derisive mood, as they got some grains of heavy shot in a certain quarter. We continued the pursuit until we were positively overcome with laughter; whenever we saw them slackening their pace in the least, accelerating it again into full speed by a discharge from a rifle in the air.

We arrived early in the evening, and a lovely one it was, at an elbow of the river, where there was the finest feed we met for some weeks — rich grasses, thickly interspersed with clover. Influenced by this temptation, as well as a desire to give the *chefs de cuisine* fair time to get their confectionery in a state of perfectability, I consented to a stop for the night; but as we were regularly circumvented by willows, the remainder set about scouring the brush, to see if there were any lurking Diggers, that we might serve them with latitats: none being found, we sat down to a *recherché* supper, all things considered; but our sore lips, inflamed eyes, and irritated lungs, were a sad drawback to our enjoyment of it.

The work next morning was harassing, getting through broken ground, where the loose sand was so very deep the wheels sank almost to the naves, the poor mules panting and struggling knee-deep in it, while at a heat that would roast eggs. In one hollow it became so bad, that our best team gave out, refusing to move one inch; we therefore caught all the loose animals, and packed them together with the riding horses; but even then we were obliged to double team for over a mile, coming back for the other waggons, which caused considerable delay; and as the draught animals were so jaded, I left on the packs until we came to our camping-ground, turning in my mind for immediate proposition a project I foresaw would be forced upon us, sooner or later, and, being inevitable, I thought it better to anticipate it. So, when we halted, I called the general attention to the condition of our animals, reminding them of the distance we had still to travel, and the fact that, within that distance, lay the two prime obstacles of the entire journey—the crossing of the Desert, beyond the Sink of Humboldt River, and the Great Sierra Nevada, which, as they were aware, could only be surmounted by teams quite up to the mark. I therefore called upon each, not only as he valued the stock but his own life, to consent to have the loads revised, and everything cast aside that was not absolutely indispensable, clothing as well as food. This, I must do them the justice to say, they cheerfully acquiesced in, agreeing to appoint a man out of each mess as a committee of inspection, who were to decide and apportion the load of each, what was to be carried and what was to be rejected, I, as captain, being accorded a casting voice.

It was computed we left Independence with 22 cwt. each, which it now was supposed had been reduced to 12 cwt. Of this, on a patient revision, and calculating the number of days the journey would yet occupy, allowing ample rations for that period, and for a fortnight after our arrival, to give us breathing time to look about, we came to the conclusion that 5 cwt. from each might be thrown away; for, together with a superabundance of provisions, we had many useless superfluities in the way of dress, ammunition, &c., &c., which could be easily replaced in California. To begin, we went through the bacon, culling the worst, and weighing 1 cwt. from each waggon, together with 1 cwt. of flour, and a proportion of biscuit, dried peas, beans, and raw coffee, of which we made up half the complement, completing it with powder, lead, shot—of which we had a most inordinate quantity—boxes with extra tools, and a set of lumbering gold-washers, that were very ponderous, and took up a quantity of room. We weighed all accurately with steelyards, leaving to each, as nearly as we could adjust it, 7 cwt., everything inclusive. The bacon, flour, &c., &c., we packed in a nice heap, strewed over with willows and rushes to protect it from decay, in case any emigrants not so amply provided as we were should require them; but the powder, lead, and shot we hove into the river, lest they should fall into the hands of the Indians, and prove a source of annoyance and destruction to those who might follow us.

Seven cwt. was a handy, portable load one would imagine, and easily managed with six mules; but they were so enfeebled by unremitting daily harass, hot sands, sultry weather, and precarious food, that they moved it along with a greater effort than the 22 cwt. at starting. We calculated, also, that the revised loads would be still further reduced by 2 cwt. when we reached the base of the Great Sierra Nevada, which, if need arose, could be altogether carried on the loose and riding animals in packs, making out rather a favourable case for crossing that formidable range. There was ~~a~~ another matter that gave us not a little uneasiness: it was the state of our wheels: for since we began coming down Humboldt River, being constantly immersed in hot sand, the felloes and naves shrunk, the tyres loosened, and the spokes rattled like a bag of bones; but we resolved to manage by wedging until we got to the Sink, where we intended submerging them in water, to swell them out, before attempting the Desert, as we could not possibly devise any mode of cutting and welding the tyres.

The business of arranging our loads fully occupied us during our three nooning hours, but afforded us all infinite gratification to feel we had been easing our faithful animals of a large portion of their burdens, and that, too, without obliging ourselves to forego a single necessary that we were accustomed to use since we started. During our afternoon's drive we were not so much retarded with deep sand, but the light dust was, if possible, more annoying than ever. There happened to be a few pair of green goggles amongst the party, which were given to those suffering most from opthalmia; and those afflicted with coughs wore a sort of mouth veil, made of some scraps of cambric we fished up in our finery. We were fortunate enough, in the course of the afternoon, to fall in with a perfect orchard of wild currants, and pulled a most plentiful supply, of a much better description than those we got before, which called to mind Jeremy Diddler's celebrated apostrophe, "Be of good cheer, oh, ye clamorous bowels!"

The exertion of lifting and weighing had an evil effect on my wound, which now began paining me excessively, assuming so angry a look that I was yet apprehensive of poison, though the heat, the constant exercise, and the bad tone of system, were of themselves reason enough for the inflammation. I rode with great difficulty, but looked forward to some relief from the suppuration that was fast forming, aided by fomentation as often as opportunity offered. Being unable to move about as usual, I appointed a deputy *pro tem.* to look after camping-grounds, &c., &c., to whom I generously yielded up all the large emoluments of the office. He located us this evening in very good quarters, as far as grass and water were concerned; but there was a forest of willows that left me very ill at ease as to the safety of the stock, and the men were so fagged they were too lazy to go about searching through it for Diggers.

However, after supper, seeing some tall willows moving, without a breath of air to cause it, as no volunteers offered, I caused all the shot guns to be loaded up with heavy duck, and fired into the thickest places, not with a view of killing any skulkers, but to frighten them from their lairs. The shot made a great rustle, cutting through the crisp leaves and withered branches, producing no effect at first; but after two or three discharges the willows began to shake and shake more violently; on seeing which we raised a wild halloo, and fired a volley in quick succession, some darting into the scrub, which was now shaking like a barley-field in a stiff breeze. Presently a plop was heard in the water; and then another, followed by a succession of plop, plop, plop, plops, caused by the Indians jumping into the river to gain the other side, affording us an exhibition of equatic feats, in ducking and diving, that would draw crowds to the Cremorne Gardens; for being afraid to go out on the opposite bank, as the river was so narrow, they kept diving down stream, followed by us on the banks, saluting them with shots the moment they popped their heads over water, exactly after the fashion of a water-rat hunt in a mill-race, until we saw the poor devils were fairly exhausted, when we drew back, and let them get out as they listed. I think the lesson prevented the same party from making any further predatory attempts during the season; and I know, if only ordinary caution is used, safety would not only be insured, but those wretched savages be altogether cured of their annoying habits.

CHAPTER XVII.

Another Surgical Operation—Obliged to take up my abode in a Waggon—Time for Reflection—A Waggon Dream—Volcanic Indications—Spectral Waltzes—Shoot some Sage-Hens—Bitter bad Water—Get into the Saddle again—Petrified Fungi and Volcanic Debris—Appalling Sterility—Diminution of the River—Thickness of the Water—The Ashy Dust—Miss Mitford's definition of it—Opthalmia in the Horses—Alluvial Bottom—Milage in the Wilderness—Deceived as to the Sink—Frigidum Line—Ulcerated Sore-Throats—Appearance of the Animals—Meagre Diet—Crippled Appearance of the Caravan—Magical influence of golden Anticipations—Pimping Indians—Mowing with Case-Knives—Diggers come amongst us unawares—No Hostility—Get them to Work—Their Mode of wearing English Apparel—Make our Hay into Trusses, and divide it—Volcanic Evidences—The Sink of Humboldt River—Description of it—Order of Travel across the Desert—Reflections on the Sufferings of those who will come later in the Season—Account of their dire Character—Humboldt River free from the Musquito Torment.

I AROSE from my bivouac next morning in such pain, that I resolved anticipating the breaking of the tumour by lancing, and got one of my friends to perform the surgical operation by puncturing it deeply with a sharp knife. The discharge was immense, and the relief immediate; but my professional attendant strictly interdicted riding, and got a bed fixed for me in my waggon, which gives me an excuse for abbreviating my account of this day's travel, though, from what I could see through the clouds, it did not differ in any respect from that which we passed since we struck the river.

It gave me leisure for multifarious reflections touching the past, present, and the future. Poverty-stricken Ireland, without a potatoe to dig—Humboldt River, with its mischievous Diggers—and wealthy California, with its golden diggins; and I thought, as I dozed off into a slumber, that I was in the valley of the Sacramento, with a legion of the "hereditary bondsmen," who were "tossin' up the yallow clay," as they called it, on the points of their spades, shouting, "Hurrah, my boys! the working-man's summer is come at last; we can get gold now, when the lords and squires are unable to reach it; the wheel has gone its round; bone and sinew now beat titles and professions; maybe we won't pay off our score of the nashunal debt, and repale the Union, and set up for ourselves in raal earnist, in ould Ireland, with the sky over it:" and as they amassed their piles of treasure, they would at times pull off a stocking, and filling it with dust (not the dirty macadamized trash), tie it to the tail of a runaway steam-engine just going to start for Carricknagat and Drumiscabole, to leave it with Peggy and the childher, and a trifle for poor Master John, to help him over the bad times, though he used to "pound the cattle for the rint." And while they were thus employed, a tall, gaunt, whey-coloured chap, with a broad-brimmed hat, and epitomised inexpressibles, stalked into the midst of them, and said:

"I reckon that ar gold is none o' yourn."

"I reckon your mother rayred you in a hard summer, ould Paywattle," said Paddy Burke.

"Mind, friend, if you realise what don't belong to you, you must pay our free and enlightened government thirty dollars a month—that's a fact."

"Send a sweep," says Paddy, "up thim nostrils of yours, and laarn to spake like a Christian. What call have you to it more nor us? If the Mexicans was bate, who bate them? Wasn't the Merrican armee all Irish boys from the ould country? So none o' yer Yankee boastin' about whippin' thim five to one; and to hell with your tax, Mr. Barebones; we'll dig our bellies full."

One word "borried another, my darlint," as Mr. Burke would say, "till down came the possay comet-at-us, when the fun began in raal earnest, and maybe the tax-men didn't get Thulahogue's payment, more kicks nor ha'pence;"—waking your humble servant in the row.

The train pulled up to noon in a kind of peninsula, where the river runs close under a high hill, covered from top to bottom with volcanic debris and sharp vitreous gravel, that wounded the worn-down hoofs of the animals, causing them all to move tenderly. We continued our route in a direct line towards a distant line of willows, which indicated the course of the stream, avoiding a round of at least three miles. The plain was sparsely covered with sage, but marked with immense spaces of saline incrustations, thicker and more firm than any we yet met, not even breaking under the wheel. The effects of a whirlwind were curiously observable as it passed down the valley on the other side of the river along the base of the mountains; but while it was sucking sage and sand in tall spiral columns into the clouds, and wheeling them along in rapid mazes and stupendous gyrations, like huge spectres waltzing to some unearthly music, we had not an air stirring on our side. As we approached the river again we were intercepted by a thick grove of sage, that debarred all progress without the aid of the axe; but it was not much of a job, being narrow; and we were recompensed for our trouble by flushing a pack of sage-hens, from which we picked out three brace, making a most agreeable addition to our customary supper.

The water of the river, now clearly shrinking, both by evaporation and absorption, was positively bitter of alkali, preparing us for an increasing deterioration as we proceeded—not a very consoling look-out for unacclimatised travellers, already suffering from its modified effects. The only cure left us, and one which we resolved pushing to the extreme, was despatch. All our ailing men were growing worse and worse, and lest the example I set them of riding in a waggon should embolden others to look for a similar indulgence, I made up my mind to resume the saddle next day, let my pain or suffering be what it might, as the lighter the load the greater the impunity from travel, and even half a day saved from the trials of such a march would be cheaply purchased at so much self-denial.

Next day I had my charger saddled, but was painfully puzzled to get into my seat, my wound, though improved, being still much inflamed. We presented rather a novel appearance, some with green goggles, others with bandages across their mouths, and the remainder with aprons on their lips, which were really frightful and disgusting to look upon. The river, which heretofore flowed through flat bottoms, nearly on a level with its banks, now bent its course through high sand bluffs, outside of which our trail lay; the general face of the valley, though more rolling and broken, was still of the same unvarying character. We found in several places large masses of vegetable matter, looking like petrified fungi, which struck me as out of place amidst the profusion of volcanic matter scattered so thickly around. I was curious enough to take a specimen on with me, without being able to obtain a satisfactory solution as to their anomalous location, for there was not the smallest particle of vegetation except sage beyond the bluffs, and even that appeared worsted in the battle of existence.

At nooning time we unharnessed from the waggons where they stood on the trail, and drove the stock over the sand-hills to the river; but even there the feed was very indifferent, and the porous banks were fast diminishing the river into a paltry stream, now nearly the consistence of thin gruel, so fully was it impregnated with alkali, and nearly at a blood heat. Taking a hint from the East Indian mode of cooling fluids, I sewed up my canteen in flannel, which produced a good effect, all the rest covering theirs in like manner, the effects of the lye not being so perceptible in the cooler beverage. The most smothering drive we had yet was this evening's one, over the light ashy dust, mixed with the white powder, drifted at times from the contiguous incrustations, forming an imponderous volatile composition, that, once stirred up, only went to rest with the sun, filling the circumambient air with all sorts of prismatic hues, and making us smart as it settled in the deep chinks in our lips. In some places it gathered in waves upon the plain after the subsidence of the winds, like a frozen ocean, reaching the mules' bellies as they waded through them at a snail's pace, that threatened momentarily to subside into total inaction. I believe it is Miss Mitford who designates dust "as mud in high spirits;" but I would, for my part, rather encounter it in its most sullen mood, than while thus disporting itself in cloudy mirth and revelry.

I observed some of the horses this evening running water from the eyes, while three more were added to the list of men ailing in that way. There was much sighing and despondency; but I sought to keep up their spirits by the assurance that three days more would bring us to the banks of Carson River, a cool, limpid stream, fed from the pure source of everlasting snow; yet three days' probation to men in their state looked like eternity. Our camp to-night was on the trail, and at noon the mules were driven over the sand-hills to pasture—such as it was—but not one of them, that I saw, went near the water.

The only change worthy of notice in our next day's travel was, that instead of travelling outside the sand bluffs the trail crossed them as they receded from the river, and let us down into a level alluvial bottom, evidently the course of the river in its swollen state. It was grassy in spots, and, to our great relief and delight, free from dust; the wheeling, too, was so firm that the mules stepped out with new pluck, rattling merrily along, and making us forget, in our improved progress, "all the ills that flesh is heir to;" for I do conscientiously believe that briskness of motion imparts elasticity and buoyancy to the spirits, as gloom and sadness always travel by a slow coach, moving like a hearse to the graves of gaiety and good humour. We made a splendid forenoon's drive of it, opening out by ten o'clock into a wide grassy plain, exactly on a level with that on which we travelled, and, like it, bounded all round with sand-hills. This, I take it, is a lake in high water, backed up by the incapacity of the Sink to engorge so unusual a quantity, which convinced me we were approaching it, making me sanguine enough about reaching it that evening, although somewhat without the distance which, according to apocryphal data, we had to travel; but in those unexplored regions a miss of a few miles might not be wondered at, when, on turnpike-roads at home, Hodge, that has been born and living in the parish all his life, will give an answer a few miles wide of the mark to an enquiry as to the distance to yonder village.

We nooned on the western verge of the basin, the river "becoming fine by degrees and beautifully less," and the water more deplorably bitter; but I kept alive the gay temper of the party by promising rations of brandy and water in the evening. The shoeing on one of the waggons got so loose towards evening we had to pull up and wedge it all round; indeed, all were in a very shaky state for getting over the Great Sierra Nevada; however, I knew, when I got amongst brooks, and rivulets, and snow-drifts, they would quickly regain their usual dimensions. The bluffs again approached the river, but left us a nice level track to travel on, where we stepped out, I can assure you, as if we carried the mail, without kicking up a dust either, having no turbulent or ambitious fly travelling round the nave of the wheel. Stiff and aching as I was, I rode forward a good distance, hoping to have an agreeable surprise for my companions by announcing the Sink; and was very nearly betrayed into the mistake on coming within view of a large tract of reeds and bulrushes, without any open line amongst them that I could see indicating the course of the river. Before, however, I turned round to return, and hail them with the glad shout, I rode round to the north-west side of the rushes, and there, to my disappointment, I found the odious river again emerging, running through a fertile hollow, where I chalked out our bivouac for the night. I alit and stretched upon the ground to await their arrival, and was in a sound slumber when they came up, calling for the brandy. The instant after the animals were liberated a brimmer was served round to each, and drank off without the contaminating admixture of any of Humboldt's water; after which, we all turned on with a satisfied feeling, arising from the distance we made in the day's journey, together with the expectation of reaching the Sink on the morrow.

At breakfast next morning several complained of sore throats and difficulty of swallowing. Having been myself a martyr to that ailment for a few years of my life, I undertook to prescribe for them. They arose from ulcers formed in the glands, produced, as I believe, by the use of the bad water, and the constant gulping down of the dust. The coffee this morning—augh! it was not drinkable—being more nauseous by far than a decoction of senna and salts—a few mouthfuls of the cool fluid from our canteens, and a little bread, constituted our meagre meal; as I induced them to refrain from bacon in consequence of the thirst it would be sure to engender. The appearance of the animals was anything but gratifying, all of them being tucked up in the carcases from the want of drink and feed, seeming stupid and heavy; nor was there enough of meal to afford them gruel without trenching on the stock laid by for the Desert, which I held sacred. Altogether the caravan in every branch—men, animals, and waggons—was in a very seedy and unsound state, more nearly resembling a batch of invalids crawling in search of an hospital, than a band of adventurous travellers charging the Great Sierra Nevada to jump into the golden valley of the Sacramento. But this loadstar, and the anticipated luxuries of those fertile regions, teeming with delicious fruits, and decked in floral robes of undecaying loveliness, kept up the flagging spirits, and begat an energy which, although the pure offspring of hope, largely increased our physical abilities.

We were again troubled with the dust to-day, but not to the great extent of some days back. However, the wheeling was sound and good, leaving little of a draught once the waggons were in motion. My wound was considerably better, enabling me to ride without much pain; so I started forward to examine the country with three other horsemen, expecting from every little rise to see the long wished-for Sink before us. We saw numerous moving specs along the hills to northward that we knew were Indians, which restrained us from going too far in advance, lest they should be disposed to give us a "Roland for our Oliver," in remembrance of the ducking a few evenings back. About nine o'clock we came to another rushy swamp, not, however, fully answering the description of the Sink, but from the fine patches of grass that were growing about it, we stopped to await the waggons, and commenced cutting it with our knives, and tying it in bundles, to provide feed for the Desert, in which, by the accounts given by the few who have crossed it, we were not to expect any oasis or hospitable spot.

We staked our horses, and were stooped diligently at work without a suspicion of any sort; but after a little, as one of us stood up for a rest, as the tailors do, he saw we were favoured with the presence of about thirty Diggers, sitting quietly on their haunches, looking on at our proceedings. Our first impulse was to run to our rifles; but the pacific posture of our visitors, and their nods and smiles, forbade the apprehension of danger. After a minute or so one of them arose, and held out his hand for the knife, making signs that he would cut grass if I would give it him. I accordingly handed him one, signifying my satisfaction; and at it he went like a good workman, laughing immoderately at the idea of his new employment. On seeing him go on so well I made signs to him that, if he got the others to help him, I would give them something for their trouble when the waggons came up—a proposition they assented to with alacrity, those to whom we could not furnish knives pulling it up by the roots, so that in a short time we had our hay harvest in a very forward state. I kept my promise with my sable mowers, giving in addition to his food to the Indian who led the way, a red flannel shirt, not, I must admit, in the most healthy condition. They were all mightily pleased, and eager for another job on the same terms, the shirt appearing to tickle their fancies amazingly, though the gentleman to whom I presented it got into it in an unfashionable manner, inserting his arms through certain apertures in the armpits, and permitting the sleeves to hang down empty, like those on hussar jackets, evidently showing he was unaccustomed to haberdashery decorations.

I made most elaborate efforts by signs, shrugs, and nods, with a liberal admixture of winks, to ascertain the whereabouts of the Sink, without being able to make them comprehend me. But I was enabled to form some idea of the distance by learning from them that "the great hills were only three suns' distance from us," which they indicated by pointing one elbow into the air, then looking up at the sun and describing the segment of a circle three times with the fore-finger of the other hand. A sun, according to their pantomimic meaning, measures about fifty miles—the distance they can travel in a day—which would leave the Sierra Nevada 150 miles distant, and the Sink consequently very contiguous.

We divided our trusses into four lots, assigning one to each waggon, and resumed our journey, without taking our full spell, in our anxiety to reach the Sink. Passing over a sharp gravelly bottom, full of flinty vitreous particles, very severe on the feet, round the hip of a low black mountain, so volcanic in appearance you would imagine the fires had just been quenched for a holiday, the rocks and scoria looking as cindery as if just drawn from a furnace. From this we had a full view of the low sand ridges and marshy swamps that engulf the final dribble of Humboldt River. We passed round to the south-west side over an immense baked plain, without shrub, or sand, or gravel, perfectly hard and unpleasantly white, paining the vision as it reflected back the sun's rays, and halted close by the reeds, along which there was a wide saline incrustation, and a very fœtid abominable stench. The Sink, I could see, swelled into a lake in the rainy seasons, covering the plain over which we passed with an unbroken sheet of water; but at present it was composed of a parcel of stagnant ponds and sloughs, without the slightest eddy that would give the idea of a sink or swallow-hole, so that I would be inclined to think the waters are principally, if not altogether, carried off by evaporation, except what is subtracted by the absorption of the dry thirsty sands about the district.

The moment we arrived, we commenced taking off the wheels and submerging them in the swamp till evening, when we were to start again, the order of progress for crossing the Desert being one night's march; a morning pause, to let the animals eat the grass; another short stop, to give them gruel at noon; and then, ho! for Carson River, without a halt. The distance was sixty miles; but about ten from the Sink there are some sulphur springs, where the water is somewhat drinkable; there we arranged to fill our four water-kegs to make gruel for the stock, and our own canteens, which was all we were to expect. We apprehended great difficulty in keeping the faint trail in the dark, but agreed to take it in turns of two, to walk and act as pilots; all nerving ourselves for the undertaking, by the conviction that twenty-four hours more of unflinching perseverance would extricate us from our miseries, and bring us within reach of that unappreciated fluid, more precious in our suffering condition than the untold wealth of California.

During the afternoon, as I thought over what we endured in coming down Humboldt River thus early in the season, when its waters were good for over half the distance, I felt horrified while reflecting on the fearful trials that awaited the unfortunate emigrants in the rear, who would not probably reach it until that advanced period when, from source to Sink, it is little better than a strong solution of alkali; and many of those, too, travelling by slow ox-teams, that, at the very lowest computation, would take one-third longer in accomplishing it than we did. I regarded it as a task next thing to impossible, and lamented to think it involved the fate of many an unconscious emigrant. Subsequent events fully justified my fears, for I afterwards heard from packers who arrived in California late in the year, that the banks of the Humboldt presented a truly shocking spectacle, marked by the perch, for the entire way, with rotting carcases of mules, horses, and oxen, and many a mound, showing the last resting-place of poor fellows who sank under the fearful pangs of thirst, shrivelled to death under a burning sun, with only poisoned water to wet their fevered lips.

Some, who were able to bear up under those trials, lost all their teams, and were compelled, as a last resource, to take such packs of provisions as men in their enfeebled state could carry, with a journey of near five hundred miles, the Desert and the Sierra Nevada still before them. It was not unusual to see a devoted mother staggering over those burning plains, carrying her helpless offspring on her back, when drooping herself from sickness and exhaustion. All of those, every soul, would have inevitably perished only for the charity and humanity of stronger and more fortunate travellers, who shared with a cheerful alacrity every necessary they possessed; some of them, in their uncalculating bounty, reducing themselves to the same level of destitution, from which they in turn were only partially rescued by an extraordinary effort of the government, who sent from California, on being apprised of their condition, supplies of provision and animals to carry them to their destination. Yet this is the river of which Colonel Fremont says, in the extract already quoted, "that possesses qualities which, in the progress of events, may give it both value and fame, having properties that give it a prospective value in future communications with the Pacific." Fame it already has, of a dreadful and lugubrious character; but how it can ever be valuable as a means of communication with the Pacific, subject to such excessive alternations as it annually experiences, at one season swollen beyond its banks in an impetuous current, and then subsiding into a ropy puddle, I am too stupid to discover.

There is one torment from which it is exempt, so far as my experience goes—that is the musquito persecution; and why it is so I cannot divine, for those poisonous insects are generally hatched in hot suns from the decayed vegetable matter of swamps and sloughs, which abound all along its solitary course. Nor can the mineral properties of the region have anything to do with their absence, for the Platte runs through an alkaline soil, and Bear River empties itself into the Great Salt Lake amidst the buzz of their detestable music.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Wheels braced by Immersion—Face the Desert in good Spirits—Blinding Dust—The Sulphur Springs—Heat of the Morning Sun—Grand Exhibition of Mirage—Dreadful Toil—Withering Heat—Insensibility of some of the Men—Impatience of the Stock while getting their Gruel—Temporary Insanity—Simoom—Its Providential Effects—Hurrah! Carson's River—The Science of Guzzling—Conduct of the Insane Men—Scenes of the Desert—Heartless Conduct—Whence the Name of Carson River—Its Course and Peculiarities—A Day's Rest in Paradise—Recovery of the Invalids—Colonel Fremont's Description of the Great Basin.

At one o'clock we had our wheels on, mules to, and everything ready for the Desert march. The wheels were all the better for the immersion, being braced as tight as drums, and free from the slightest rattle—a compliment I am unable to pay the men and animals, who were as lank as gentility itself. However, the fulness of spirit made up for any corporeal shrinking, for they all responded to the order "march" with as obedient an alacrity as if going to witness a review. We soon left the greenish confines of the Sink in a south-westerly course, and got out on the shores of the sandy ocean, calculating to reach the sulphur springs before dark; but we got in amongst the still billows of the light ashy earth which I have before described, that retarded us very seriously, the mules being literally obliged to breast through them, making the dust arise in such dense clouds it well-nigh nearly suffocated us, completely blinding us as to the track. We had near three miles of this nuisance, and by the time we got through the mules were panting from exhaustion, and snorting or sneezing convulsively from the effects of the quantity of stuff lodged in their nostrils, and inhaled in their breathing.

It so happened, owing, I suppose, to the watchful sagacity of the mules, that we did not go much aside from the trail, which we soon regained by a slanting course to the north-west; but in consequence of the delay in the soft sand, it was ten o'clock when we reached the neighbourhood of the sulphur springs, which we would have undoubtedly overrun, only that the mules set up a most discordant braying, which warned us of their proximity. We watered those in harness without disengaging them, leaving the loose ones to help themselves, but the water was too strong of sulphur to permit of their taking a long drink. We filled our kegs and canteens after taking a few sips, for neither the nose nor palate relished it much, getting on very well during the night afterwards, the sand being tolerably compact, and the light from the twinkling stars being sufficient to point out the trail. At the first grey blink of morning we took out the mules and unharnessd them, that they might enjoy a tumble, giving them the grass, and taking ourselves a stretch of an hour, the time appointed for the guard to call us up.

The red sun was peeping over the eastern mountains in our rear when we arose to eat a biscuit moistened in sulphur water. I expected to have seen the peaks of the Great Sierra Nevada, but the hazy horizon of the sandy waste hid them from our view, leaving nothing to be seen but sand, not even a solitary plant of artemesia marking the unvarying surface of the Desert. The sun fired up with great intensity, and so very early as eight o'clock struck with a glow that made us quail at the idea of its meridian vigour, causing us to have frequent recourse to the stinking liquor in our canteens. I admonished all to husband it, bad as it was, with miserly care, desiring them to try the expedient of carrying a pebble in their mouths, which generated a secretion that modified the appetite of thirst. We got on at a round steady pace, averaging three miles per hour, until ten o'clock, when we met a district of soft sand, not of the impenderous sort, which strained the sinews of the honest mules to their utmost extent, making it painful to look at the steadfast creatures as they worked determinedly along, seeing that the labour was so very distressing, for even the loose stock got through it with considerable exertion.

We had an opportunity this morning of witnessing, I think in its most copious and magnificent form, that wonderful illusory spectacle of mirage, first in the shape of an extensive lake, whose placid and translucent bosom was dotted over with lovely islands, beautifully wooded and gracefully reflected in the glassy waters; its picturesque shores indented with shady bays, and handsome peninsulas jutting out at points, finely timbered with stately trees. Then, like the moving of a stupendous panorama, the waters passed away to make room for the semblance of a mighty city, surmounted with domes, and spires, and columns, obelisks and minarets, opening into vast architectural vistas and enchanting boulevards; where triumphal arches, frowning towers, and gorgeous pagodas were successively disclosed to view; and as those melted into haze, the sylvan suburbs swelled ravishingly on the sight, revealing majestic parks and umbrageous avenues, that alluringly invited us to their cool, delicious shades. But this is a tame and inadequate description of the superb illusion, the marvellous grandeur of which is alike beyond the powers or the pen to describe or the pencil to portray. I thought for the time I was on enchanted ground, forgetting in my admiring amazement the arid Desert and its burning horrors. It is a curious fact with regard to mirage, as showing how much more largely the animal than the man is endowed with mere instinct, that while the reasoning creature is frequently deceived in the exercise of the sense of vision, the dumb brute is never for a moment at fault. We often saw what we could have sworn was water, and would have been betrayed into a phantom hunt only for the silence of the mules, whose superior sagacity could detect its neighbourhood without the corroboration of a glimpse.

After two hours of dreadful toiling through the loose hot sands we emerged on a hard plain, broken in places, but devoid of a particle of any sort of vegetation.

This was a great relief to the draught animals; but the direct flames of the solar fire seemed absolutely to curl around us, creating a wavy visible sort of atmosphere, as if we were moving through transparent smoke; and this at length produced a state of insensibility in some and madness in others, four of the men coming up to me and demanding water in a most peremptory tone, as if I had a supply, and denied them access to it. About twelve o'clock we halted, to administer the gruel to the animals, but there were only seven men out of the entire able to lend a hand. Some were howling for water, and some threw themselves in a fainting state under the shade of the waggons. I never felt myself so nearly overcome; and only for a great effort I made, feeling that, as the conductor of the company, it was incumbent on me to set a good example, I should have also sank in the struggle. As soon as the poor brutes in harness heard the gurgling of the water from the kegs, they brayed, as I thought, in a piteous tone, saying, "Oh! let us have some;" while the others pressed around, being with difficulty restrained from trampling on us while we were draining it off; and it was a matter of no small trouble to give each his basin, from the manner in which the others would poke into it.

This done, the word "Move" was passed; but I found one of the teamsters altogether incapable of driving, and, sore against my grain, had to place him and the two insane men in the waggons, the latter having become so restless and outrageous that I was reluctantly constrained to resort to the disagreeable alternative of tying them down. Those that were under the waggons did not appear to hear the order, nor could they be got to heed its iteration until the waggons were moved on, and they were left exposed to the sun, when they arose, but in a dreadfully enervated state. I implored, I exhorted them to struggle on for two hours more, when we would reach relief; but they were deaf and insensible, and had to be lifted into their saddles. At length we all got in motion, and three of the least exhausted men rode ahead on our best horses, with directions to return and meet us as soon as possible with water, which I knew, from the time of travel, could not be more than ten or twelve miles off, unless we missed our way; an idea I would not listen to, for it involved our entire destruction.

Soon after the men sarted, a small black cloud arose in the north, and before it attained any great magnitude a sighing air of wind was felt passing us by, followed in the distance by a line of dust extending along the entire horizon. I never heard of a simoom on the North American continent, but I saw the effects of a whirlwind, and thought there was one now rushing upon us, from which there was no shelter or escape, the only thing to be done being to back the waggons in a line to it, and await its fury and results. Before, however, the evolution was fully made, it came upon us with a roaring violence, driving the sand before it in clouds and waves that soon raised in a drift to the height of the waggons, the mules and horses, cowering, backed into the shelter, while the roof was torn completely off one waggon and carried out of sight like a feather. It had not been raging quite five minutes when heavy drops of rain began falling, the wind abating as they increased into a copious deluge, that drenched everything, quenched our fever, and entirely resuscitated the animals, producing all the effects of an internal draught, the greedy pores of the skin absorbing it instantaneously, for the shower was not well over when the saturated garments were as dry as spunk. The poor creatures in the waggons derived some relief from sucking the waggon sheets, and with one accord we raised our hands and thoughts to a beneficent Providence, returning thanks for the timely deliverance.

All now felt endowed with fresh vigour, and were quite independent of succour when the men returned from the river, reporting it only four miles distant; at the same time pointing out to us the line of planting peeping above the sand bluffs; so that within one hour and a half we were driving down the slope to Carson River. Before it appeared in view the loose stock ran madly past us, dashing into the cooling current, until they were nearly aswim. The mules, too, in harness made a rush to be off, one team actually succeeding in breaking away in consequence of the weakness of the teamster, upsetting the waggon in the stream, damaging everything it contained, and very nearly drowning one of the insane men who was tied in it. Some of the men appeared to have as little self-control as the brutes, and kept swilling goblet after goblet until I thought they would burst. I permitted the insane men to crawl out, and went down with them, lest they should go beyond their depth; but instead of approaching the water, they both lay down in the wet sand as with one impulse, and commenced scraping it over their stomachs precisely in the same manner, endeavouring, you would fancy, to imitate each other in all their actions and incoherent ravings. I got each to drink a small cup of water, and had them removed to their tents, administering some cooling medicine, which produced a very quick and salutary effect.

We remained where we were for the night, the whole duty of standing guard, cooking, &c., &c., devolving on myself and two others, the remainder, and those in regular rotation, protesting their utter inability to do so. It was particularly hard on me, being on duty the night before; but I was so elated at having got over the Desert in safety, I made no scruple about it, though I must admit my eyes were unwilling parties in the undertaking, giving me incessant bother to keep them in a state of active co-operation.

I heard from the same parties who gave me the information respecting Humboldt River, that the scenes and occurrences in the Desert even transcended the others in melancholy horror, the whole line being marked with putrid carcases and deserted waggons, while the air was filled with the moans of the dying, the wails of the suffering, and the wild screams of the maniac. Few, if any, had teams in a state to take them over the barren waste at one flight, the nine-tenths being obliged to wait in the middle of this oven, and send on the animals to recruit for a few days; when some few that were in a position to do so, commenced a trade of packing small kegs of water on their mules and retailing it at exorbitant rates; but their heartless extortions drove the sufferers into a united exertion to sink a well, which was rewarded by a moderate supply of tolerable water. I have no manner of doubt, that had we proceeded without lightening our loads, we would also have been obliged to halt, for even with what we carried we had very little indeed to spare.

Carson River takes its name from a celebrated mountaineer called Kit Carson, who from his earliest years evinced a great disposition for roaming amidst the wild scenes of his unexplored country; a leaning he afterwards indulged in to the fullest extent, anticipating the discoveries of scientific research, becoming thoroughly familiarised with Indian habits, and personally known to many of the tribes, over whom he exerts a great influence. He gave his name, as in this instance, to localities, from being the first to find them out; aiding the government of his country in making amicable treaties with warlike Indians; and is now, I believe, in the employ of the States, in some capacity connected with the sphere of his experience. Carson River is a handsome clear stream, and has its source in the regions of perpetual snow flowing down the eastern flank of the Sierra Nevada, and like all the rivers issuing from the mountains in the circumference of the Great Basin, obeys the general law of losing itself in a lake of its own formation. It abounds in salmon trout, and has a course of about one hundred miles, with a fine bench of alluvion running along it the entire distance on each side, save where it cañons in the mountains.

The morning after our arrival we moved about five miles up the river, into a glorious meadow of clover and rich nutritious grasses, shaded with gigantic oak and cotton-wood trees, under which the stock fed with comfort, there being no brush or underwood to interrupt them. I deemed it prudential to remain here for two days, to allow them to pluck up for the last great task—the crossing of the Sierra—giving those who had a *penchant* for light-coloured linen an opportunity of exclaiming, with Hamlet, "Aye, there's the rub." There was a nice shelving sand-bank on our temporary domain, sloping into the stream, from the stem of an overhanging oak, over which the tiny waves of the limpid current chased each other in smiling sportiveness, wooing us into their chaste embrace with resistless witchery. This was the favourite haunt of all; here we bathed, and rolled, and lolled, and paddled, cleansing away in the pure stream the abominations of the Humboldt, and drinking deep draughts of health and vigour at this primitive dispensary, so that, within the forty-eight hours of our sojourn, the general improvement was as astonishing as it was delightful.

Although still near ninety miles from the great Sierra Nevada, I regarded myself as at the rim of the Great Basin, once over the Desert, a brief description of which I will transcribe from the condensed memoir of Colonel Fremont already quoted from, showing how exactly it tallies in the general character with the description I give of it in the foregoing pages:

"East of the Sierra Nevada, and between it and the Rocky Mountains, is that anomalous feature in the continent—the Great Basin—the existence of which was advanced as a theory after my second expedition, and is now established as a geographical fact. It is a singular feature, a basin of some five hundred miles in diameter every way, between four and five thousand feet above the level of the sea, shut in all around by mountains, with its own system of lakes and rivers, having no connexion whatever with the sea, partly and sparsely inhabited.

"The general character of the Great Basin is that of desert, but with great exceptions, there being many parts of it fit for the residence of civilised people, and of these parts the Mormons have lately established themselves in one of the largest and best. Mountain is the predominating structure of the interior of the basin, with plains between the mountains wooded and watered, the plains arid and sterile, the interior mountains conforming to the law which governs the course of the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada, ranging nearly north and south, and present a very uniform character of abruptness, rising suddenly from a very narrow base of ten or twenty miles, and attaining an elevation of two to five thousand feet above the level of the country on which they stand. They are grassy and wooded, showing snow on their summit peaks during the greater part of the year, and affording small streams of water, from five to fifty feet wide, which lose themselves, some in lakes, some in dry plains, and some in belts of alluvial soil at their base—for these mountains have very uniformly this belt of alluvion, the wash and abraison of their sides—rich in excellent grasses, fertile and light, and loose enough to absorb small streams. Between these mountains are the arid plains, which receive and deserve the name of the Desert. Such is the general structure of the interior of the Great Basin—more Asiatic than American in its character, and much resembling the elevated regions between the Caspian Sea and Northern Persia. The rim of the Great Basin is massive; ranges of mountain, of which the Sierra Nevada on the west, the Wah-Satch and Timpanogos chains on the east, are the most conspicuous. On the north it is separated from the waters of the Columbia by a branch of the Rocky Mountains, and from the Gulf of California on the south by a bed of mountain ranges, of which the existence has only been very recently determined.

"Snow abounds on them all; in some, on their loftier parts, the whole year round, with wood, and grass, and copious streams of water, that sometimes amount to considerable rivers, flowing inwards, and forming lakes or sinking in the sands. Belts or benches of good alluvion are usually found at their base. The interior of the Great Basin, so far as explored, is found to be a succession of sharp mountain ranges and naked plains, such as have been described. These ranges are isolated, presenting summit lines broken into peaks, of which the highest are between ten and eleven thousand feet above the level of the sea. They are thinly wooded, with some varieties of pine (pinus monophylbus characteristic) cedar, aspen, and a few other varieties, and afford in places an excellent quality of bunch grass, equal to any found on the Rocky Mountains. Black-tailed deer and mountain sheep are frequent in these mountains, which, in consideration of their grass, water, and wood, and alluvion at their base, may be called fertile in the radical sense of the word, as signifying a capacity to produce or bear, and in contradistinction to sterility. Sterility on the contrary, is the absolute characteristic of the valleys between the mountains—no wood, no water, no grass—the gloomy artemesia, the prevailing shrub—no animal except the fleet and timid antelope, always on the watch for danger, and finding no place too dry or barren, which gives a wide horizon for its view and a clear field for its flight. Few birds are seen on the plains or mountains. But few Indians are found, and these, in the lowest state of human existence, being not in communities, but in the elementary state of families, and sometimes a single individual to himself, except about the lakes, stocked with fish, which is the property and resort of a small tribe. The abundance and excellence of the fish in most of the lakes is a characteristic, and the fishing season to those Indians is the happy season of the year."

CHAPTER XIX.

Start from Carson River—Abridged Edition of the Desert—First View of the Great Sierra Nevada—Innocent Reflections—Laudable Forbearance—Doubt and Anxiety—Removed by Patience—Indian Mischief—Sad Retribution—No Alternative—Appearance of the Country—Indian Troop—Their Errand—Their Views—Carson River again—Can't catch Fish—Indian Footprints—Tangled Trail—Volcanic Debris—Surprise—Some Indians—Their Terror—Their loathsome Look—Trail over Cinders and Clinkers—Its Effect on the Mules and Waggons—Full Profile of the Great Sierra Nevada—Its grand Appearance—Lovely Valley—Gigantic Pines—Fremont's Description—Our Camp at the Mountain Base—Indian Visit—Trade for Trout—They dissemble their Skill in Archery—Method of drawing them out—More Fish next Morning—Indian Mode of getting into English Apparel—Romantic Emotions—Yankee Definition—Passage of an awful Canon—Description—A break down—The Crossing of the Torrent—Reed Lake—Reach the Foot of the Pass—Its impracticable Look—What the Horses think of it—What the Mules—Preparations for the Ascent.

On the morning of the fourth day after reaching the Carson, we started, in improved health and spirits, to accomplish the last great stage of our long and trying journey, travelling close to and parallel with the river for six miles; we then separated, holding our course due west, it taking a southerly sweep amongst the mountains. As soon as we left it, we lost the grass and the level trail, and became encompassed once more in the gloomy wildernesses of artemesia, with a long, trying rise to ascend. The path was uncommonly rough, and would have shaken the wheels to pieces, had we not left them soaking in the river for two days. From the point at which we left the river to where we expected to strike it again, the distance laid down in our way-bill was twenty-five miles, an abridged edition of the Desert the whole way, without water or grass, making the day's journey thirty-one miles; quite long enough on good roads, but certainly too far, if it could be avoided, over loose rocks, and stones, and sharp gravel, such as lay in our way. From the summit of the rise we got the first good and distinct view of the Great Sierra Nevada range, stretching beyond the scope of vision, north and of south, with pointed snow-capped peaks between us and the land of promise, reminding me of days gone by, and garden walls capped with glass to prevent naughty boys from stealing the rich fruit beyond them; but greedy urchins climbed the garden walls, and plucked the fruit, and avaricious men scaled the glaciered ridges of the mountain, and were gathering the treasure that nature enclosed so jealously.

There was nothing grand or striking in the immediate scenery, but there were precipitous passes, too numerous to mention, which I would have been glad in the earlier part of my journey to have had to descant on, but the reader and I have by this time become too familiarised with scenes of the sort not to concur in opinion that it would smack of bookmaking were I to give even kit-cat portraits of such common places. This day was not so insufferably hot as usual, which induced us to forego our nooning, rather than run the risk of not gaining the river before dark. The animals, too were working well up to their collars, which gave us another plea for doing so. As we consumed the afternoon every eye was looking anxiously to the south, to see where we might again expect to meet the Carson; but the very close and unbroken look of the mountain chain in that direction did not appear to leave any aperture for it to come through, and the distance round the extreme point was such that it would be quite impossible to get up before night. We followed on the trail mechanically a considerable distance in this suspense, all agreeing that we might not expect to find the river until we reached the mountain point; but just as the vote of coincidence was taken, we were pleasingly convinced of our error, by the opening out of a dark glen in the mountain-side, through which it forced its way, and was travelling all the time of our disputation, within almost ear-shot of the debate, on the other side of a high sand bluff, where we fixed our camp.

Before dusk we were startled by the stock, who rushed up from the river edge in a terrible fright, the cause of which was soon apparent from an arrow, as ill luck would have it, in the neck of the bell-mare, who, when she looked back on the shaft with its feathered end sticking out, wheeled round and round, as if to avoid and shake it off; then, snorting in affright, galloped for a spurt, followed, as a matter of course, by the remainder of the animals, some of which at length coming in contact with it, broke it off close by the flesh. It was high up in the crest, and therefore not dangerous, scarcely bleeding a drop; but although she permitted us to catch her, she would not allow us, all we could do, to extract it; so we let her rest until morning, turning our attention to the perpetrators of the outrage.

The night was pretty clear, with the moon a quarter old, and six men volunteered to cross the river about half a mile down, where, spreading out over a wide, gravelly bar, it became shallow and fordable. The mare having become peaceable, the stock commenced feeding again, while we returned to our tents as if nothing occurred, watching at the same time closely. Soon after it was evident there was something astir, for the animals all raised up their heads, looking towards the river, and almost at the same moment four distinct shots were heard on the other side. On running down, our comrades shouted over to us that two of the wretched Indians were killed out of a party of eighteen or twenty. It would have given me gratification if they were crippled or wounded, as they richly deserved some punishment for such acts, but the hurrying of two unfortunate souls into eternity for hunting a dumb beast, came, I must say, with sad concern upon my conscience. However, it must be allowed, that unless such conduct was checked, by making summary examples, the lives and properties of hundreds of emigrants might be sacrificed by having their teams destroyed, and being thus disabled from reaching their destination.

We separated from the river early next day, again taking a line to the mountain point remarked the evening before. The path here was perfectly level for eight miles, and free from obstruction of any sort. But as we advanced, detached peaks started into view all around us, having no connexion whatever with the Sierra, of pleasing configuration, grassy, and partially timbered to the tops, but none attaining an elevation to retain the snow caps. After passing the point, the trail descended an incline for about five miles, bisecting in a dark line an immense white tract, that shone like snow in its glossy whiteness, which at the distance I took for a large saleratus lake dried up by evaporation. When about half-way down the slope a considerable body of mounted men were seen riding at a rapid pace across it, whom I distinguished by the glass to be Indians—perhaps on a mission of revenge. I was sick at the thought of blood since last night, but, nevertheless, it was a duty we owed ourselves to guard against danger; so I called on the men to prepare, but be cool and steady.

The Indians had by this time come pretty close, and were driving before them an unbridled horse, with a short staff carrying the American flag fastened in an upright position to the horn of the saddle; a few of the Indians being partially clothed in civilised attire I concluded we had nothing to apprehend; neither did they fear anything, for they rode right up to us before they pulled a bridle. The chief of the party, speaking some English, told us they came direct from California, from the valley of the Sacramento, and were in the employ of Captain Sutter, who despatched them on their present errand to the head of Humboldt River, to meet Mrs. Sutter, who was on her way out, and conduct her to the settlements. He gave us minute particulars respecting the remainder of the route, and news of great encouragement about the mines; dismounting, going through the form of picking and washing, showing us, by a measure of gravel in his hand, how much we could gather each day "to work good," but warning us to be on our guard for "bad Indian, as he kill mule;" a piece of advice we all along anticipated. They took their leave without asking for anything (a very unusual occurrence for an Indian), but I suspect Captain Sutter fitted them out so liberally they were not in want, for they had a number of well-laden pack-horses with them.

The white space we saw from the eminence was a stratum of clay whiter than chalk, and polished like statuary marble, excessively hard for about two inches in depth, after which it got gradually softer. From this we ascended to a mountain gap, whence we had another view of Carson River, which was here heavily timbered, reaching it at five o'clock, after a march of twenty-five miles. On watering our stock, we found the sands everywhere imprinted with the bare foot-marks of Indians, employed, as we supposed, in fishing, from the number of fine trout we could see in the clear stream; but they studiously avoided us, though if they brought us fish to exchange we would have given them a liberal trade. Their coyness made us all the more watchful, especially from what Sutter's Indians told us; however, they did not molest or annoy us in the least. We spent the evening in angling, some with baits and some with flies, but we did not get a solitary nibble, though we could see those fastidious trout coming up to survey our temptation, and then turn contemptuously away—a sad disappointment, for we laid out accounts for great fish feasting on the Carson. We also tried the net; but the waters were so clear they saw all our movements, and evaded our machinations.

We stuck closely to the river the next day, following it through small cañons and thickly-wooded ravines, where we were obliged to precede the waggons with knives and saws to cut a passage through the tangled brush that was so twined across our path, with nothing but an Indian foot trail, as to be otherwise impervious. In some of the open places on the banks there were temporary huts erected, the spaces about them strewed with fish heads and bones in thick profusion, demonstrating the abundance, and showing, too, that they must have been of a good size; but as yet we could not lay eyes upon an Indian. The river at length bent between two lofty hills, along the base of which the cotton-wood trees were too close to admit of a passage, and too gross to give room for the idea of cutting a line of them down; we therefore took a line inclining to the north, which here rose to a good altitude, exhibiting more recent effects of volcanic action than we had yet met with. We saw plenty of deer-trail in the various dells we passed, and, in the absence of fish, and being now a long time without a change of fresh food, we organised a hunting party, who diverged from the trail, and were not long gone when there arose a loud shout, a sort of whoop, as if in close chase, that gave rise to the expectation of a grizly bear, as we were now within their territory; but as I cantered to the edge of the break, from whence the sounds issued, I met three squaws carrying their infants, accompanied by two grown-up children, who immediately set up a most piteous piercing cry, and sat down rocking to and fro, seeing they could not escape, and fearing each moment was to be their last. I got down and sought to pacify and assure them, making all the friendly signs I picked up in my travels, but to no purpose; they still kept rocking and wailing in a most penetrating strain, all but the elder children, who did not appear much terrified, standing mutely gazing at me during the scene. I beckoned them to come to the waggons, which were now at hand, and I would make them some presents; as I could not, however, induce them to stir, I went to bring them something, but, so soon as I turned away, they darted again into the thicket, and I saw no more of them. They were loathsome looking wretches, low in stature, with long black matted hair, hanging in ropes over their faces, and of a flabby habit of body that rendered them peculiarly repulsive.

Now and then we could hear another halloo, and finally two shots saluted our ears, that at first startled me, thinking they might have been aimed at the flying Indians; but a recollection of our conversation after the late tragedy reassured me, and further confirmation was soon after added by the hunters themselves, carrying the carcase of a fine black-tailed deer. The hills and country before us had a most scorched and blackened aspect, presenting an appearance as if a volcano had been flaring up in the neighbourhood overnight, and the stones and stuff it vomited up had barely cooled. They were sharp angular blocks, thrown in irregular beds and heaps, like cinders and clinkers around a furnace, and making a very unpleasant causeway; so loosely strewn in places you could see several feet down amongst them, making it dangerous for the tread, and shaking the waggons so tremendously one of the axles showed symptoms of yielding, rendering it necessary to splice and tie it up, while four of the mules got very seriously cut about the legs and fetlocks, which made them unfit to continue in harness.

After scrambling over about three miles of this sort of road, we struck the river again, and went up it a good distance, till we came to a low open tract, which it almost circumvented, the land appearing as if formed by the alluvial deposit of the stream, which, from the watermarks on the hill's sides, we saw covered it completely in the winter season. It had a splendid crop of grass, on which we stopped to noon, and passing from it by a short narrow pass, came into full view of the great range of the Sierra Nevada, without an obstacle to prevent the eye from scanning the lowest ledge at the base, up to the highest peak in the clear blue azure heavens. It was a noble and astonishing spectacle, especially calculated to arrest and fix the gaze of those only accustomed to behold our little insular tumuli. The range was not more than nine miles off, in a direct line, but the trail took a south-westerly trend, leading into a valley that lay along the foot, embraced by the Carson, that bounded it on the south and east, and which for soil, situation, and natural charms, eclipsed the most highly favoured localities in our journey. I got into an ecstatic mood on entering it, feeling as though I stood in fairy-land; and in the blissful serenity that reigned around, feared almost to breathe, lest the mortal contamination should dissolve the delicious spell by which I was entranced; it looked peacefully hallowed, in its Elysian loveliness — too happy, too divine a spot for the dwelling-place of other than pure unsinful essences, where the cankers of worldly ambition could never take root, or spread their baleful influences. It is some twenty miles long, of an oval shape, reclining in a sweet easy slope from the base of the Sierra to the river, intersected with numerous small streams, of the most crystal clearness, flowing down the mountain flank; the soil composed of a black unctuous loam, that threw up verdant fleeces of clover, and rich indigenous grasses, enamelled with beauteous flowers of the most delicate tints, like a lovely lawn, in contrast with the stupendous range that towered above it in the heavens, with a peculiarity entirely their own, rising immediately from a level surface, like a pyramid from the plain, their sides covered with gigantic pines that partook of their peaky character, standing so far apart, they feathered out below to immense length, and tapering upwards with the most uniform graduation till they terminated in a point formed by a solitary leader.

Colonel Fremont thus describes the range:—"The great Sierra Nevada is part of the great mountain range, which under different names, and at different elevations, but with much uniformity of direction, and general proximity to the coast, extends from the peninsula of California to Russian America, and without a gap in the distance, through which the waters of the Rocky Mountains could reach the Pacific Ocean, except at two places where the Columbia and Frazer's River respectively find their passage. The great range is remarkable for its length, its proximity, and its parallelism to the sea-coast; its great elevation, often more lofty than the Rocky Mountains, and its many grand volcanic peaks, reaching high into the region of perpetual snow, rising singly like pyramids from heavily-timbered plateaux, to the height of fourteen and seventeen thousand feet above the level of the sea. These snowy peaks constitute the characterising feature of this range, and distinguish it from the Rocky Mountains and all others on our part of the continent. That part of the range which traverses Alta California is called the Sierra Nevada (snowy mountains), a name in itself implying a great elevation, and is only applied in Spanish geography to the mountains whose summits penetrate the region of perpetual snow. It is a grand feature of California, and a dominating one, and must be well understood before the structure of the country and the character of its different divisions can be comprehended. It divides California into two parts, and exercises a decided influence on the climate, soil, and productions of each, stretching along the coast, and at a general distance of one hundred and fifty miles from it. This great mountain wall receives the warm winds charged with vapour, which sweep across the Pacific Ocean, precipitates their accumulated moisture in fertilising rain and snows upon its western flank, and leaves the cold dry winds to pass to the east. Hence the differences of the two regions, mildness, fertility, and a superb vegetable kingdom on one side, comparative barrenness and cold on the other, the two sides of the Sierra Nevada exhibit two distinct climates. The state of vegetation, in connexion with some thermometrical observations made during the recent exploring expedition to California, will establish and illustrate this difference. In the beginning of December we crossed the Sierra at latitude 39 deg. 17 min. 12 sec., at the head of Salmon Trout River (about forty miles north of the Carson), forty miles north of New Helvetia, and made observations at each base, and in the same latitude, to determine the respective temperatures, the two bases being, respectively—the western base about five thousand feet, the eastern about four thousand feet above the level of the sea. The mean result of the observations were—on the eastern side, at sunrise, 9 deg.; at noon, 44 deg; at sunset, 30 deg.; the state of the vegetation and the appearance of the country being at the same time (second week of December) that of confirmed winter, the rivers frozen over, snow on the ridges, annual plants dead, grass dry, and deciduous trees stripped of their foliage. At the western base, the mean temperature during a corresponding week, was, at sunrise, 29 deg., and sunset, 52 deg.; the state of the atmosphere and of the vegetation that of advancing spring, grass fresh and green, from four to eight inches high, vernal plants in bloom, the air soft, and all the streams free from ice. Thus December on one side of the mountains was winter, on the other it was spring."

Our camp in the little Elysium was close under the mountains, at one of the several rivulets, the plain about us covered so profusely with clover blossoms, that in fact the animals could lie down and fill themselves on the spot, it grew in such luxuriant abundance. We were busily engaged in supper preparations, grinding coffee, baking buns, and dusting some venison steak with pepper and salt for the pan, when two Indians came into camp, each carrying two glorious trout, weighing, I should say, five pounds each, formed and speckled without any distinguishable difference from our Irish salmon-trout: those we got for two tattered flannel shirts, which furnished a supper that left nothing to be desired. We gave the the Indians to understand we would take all they could bring, and treated them with marked kindness and hospitality, to try and banish their reserve, and establish a good feeling, which, as far as appearance would indicate, they seemed to reciprocate. They were particularly delighted with the hot buns, but we made them use hard bread for filling stuff, not having enough of the others to spare for a full meal. After supper some of the men took up their bows and commenced firing at a tree, without being able to hit it, whereupon they asked the Indians to shoot, which they appeared reluctant to do, but, on being pressed, consented, firing fully as wide of the mark as their white acquaintances. Suspecting, however, they were shamming, I took a bun that was left, and sticking it in the bark of the tree, made signs that, whoever hit it, should have it to eat; on hearing which, one of them took up his bow, and, without any studious aim, drove his arrow right into the dimple of the crust; showing, it was clear, they were disinclined to let us see their skill in the first instance, lest we should harbour bad impressions about them.

Next morning we were midway down the valley, when we saw a lot of Indians crossing it from the river, all carrying fish, which they catch in ingenious traps made of willow, laid in the likely haunts, from which the trout, once in, cannot escape. They had upwards of two dozen very fine ones, from two to five pounds each; and although I had my doubts about their keeping until we could use them, I thought it right to keep my promise and take them all. Not having buns, we made it up in old shirts, worn-out vests, and ventilating pantaloons, which one of those primitive fishermen endeavoured to use in an inverted shape, sticking his arms through the legs, and bringing his head where his bustle should be, until we pointed out the approved mode of getting into them; an operation, by the way, not so very easy, from the number of apertures that arrested his toes in their descent. As yet we could not see any indentation or sign of a pass, but the Indians pointed to the river, motioning that by following it we would find the place. On leaving this resplendent valley, I looked back on it as a beautiful picture I was going to behold for the last time, and turned from it with a reluctant regret, my head and heart filled with all sorts of romantic and Petrarchical notions and ideas.

The windings of the stream soon again involved us amidst hills and broken ground, through which we wended our way to where it took a decided eastern shoot. There, directly before us, gaped the narrow opening, or cañon, through which we were to pass, I may say, through the bowels of the outer mountain wall. It opened at its gorge into a crescent-shaped green lawn, on which stood a few of the most wondrous trees I ever beheld, piercing the clouds with their pointed tops, while it took three of us with joined hands to girth their stems, which measured good twenty feet in circumference—dimensions I would have regarded as incredible before I saw them, or, according to Yankee definition, "so almighty stout 'twould tire a rat to run round them." The river came foaming through it in brawling cascades, leaving room enough, such as it was, for a mile to travel along it, but getting more compressed and gloomy as we advanced, the rent and fractured sides so approximating that it made one's flesh creep to look up and see huge crags suspended, you would imagine, by small fibrous twigs, hundreds of feet above your head, wanting only the vibration of an echo to break the frail ligatures, and grind you into eternity; and rent columns of rock, detached from the face of the precipice, standing with such a lean that the perching of a bird on them would cause a shudder lest it should destroy their equilibrium. The path, too, if path it could be called, was unprecedentedly rugged, both mules and waggons staggering over confused piles of rocks, where a goat could scarcely walk with confidence. Further ahead, the roaring of a large cataract boomed upon our ears, and on penetrating to it, it looked as if all further progress was at an end, for the height from which it madly leaped appeared inaccessible to the foot of a climber, much less to the wheels of a waggon; but "auri sacra fames, quid non mortalia pectora cogis?" what looked impossible was soon made practicable; every one prizing and rolling rocks and stones from the top until the semblance of an incline was formed, on which we hauled up some of the heavier and more compact packages with ropes, and afterwards attaching them to the waggon-poles, with six mules and twenty men to each, got all but one safely to the top. This was the one with the damaged axle, which on this occasion snapped, shivering one of the wheels into atoms—an accident there was only one way of dealing with, for though we could make and mount a pole or axle, a wheel was a pop beyond our ability; so I decided on cutting short the body of the waggon, and mounting it on one pair of wheels, as a balance cart, a job which, taking some hours, decided us on camping on the spot, and working all night, for it did not suit being delayed in such a place, without any feed but twigs and brambles. Long before morning it was finished, and we resumed our march the moment we had light.

About one mile beyond the cataract the river bent over so close to the side we were on as to render a crossing imperative; but on examining and sounding it, the bottom was so uneven we could not dare venture, except by a bridge, or filling up the deep holes; which latter expedient we decided on, rolling from the sides tons upon tons of rocks and stones, then stripping and going in to adjust them—an undertaking that, from the rush of the torrent, was truly dangerous. As soon as our engineer, Mr. D——n, pronounced it practicable, the same brave fellow who made the first descent into the Mormon cañon got into the saddle of the leading team, and forced the reluctant mules into the foaming stream. For a little they went on well, all eyes nervously watching, all pulses quickly beating; but before they came to the centre the lead span shied it, and wheeled round to return. It was an alarming moment, but the driver's nerves were firm; had he wavered or relaxed in the least, all would have been lost—dashed down amongst the rocks with resistless violence; but he held them with a cool and firm hold, until some men rushed in and caught them by the head, straightening them again in the draught; after which, they pulled out without a stop, all the others following without any accident or interruption. After two miles more of jolting and jostling we got into an open space, with good pasture, where we stopped four hours, to permit the animals to make amends for their scant fare the night before.

Inside the outer wall of the mountain we had a delightful evening's journey, over rolling ground and through lovely glens, crowded with black-tailed deer; but as we had a stock of venison and fish, and were sure of meeting lots of deer all over the Sierra, we did not disturb them. Towards evening we came to a lake close under the main ridges of the mountain, which explorers call Reed Lake—from the broad margin of reeds that surround it; and a short distance beyond the lake, came to the foot of the steep, where the trail curled up to the formidable pass, at the foot of which we halted for the night, to make preparations for the undertaking. Had we met such an ascent in the earlier part of the journey, I fancy we would have pronounced it insurmountable, and turned back in despair; but having encountered so many dangerous places, and overcome so many difficulties, we became inured to hazard and toil, only regarding the greatest obstacles as merely perplexing, but never impossible; and as this was the only remaining one, we were resolved not to be stopped, if recourse was to be had to the agency of powder. By way of experiment, in the evening, just to see if the animals could clamber up, or work in such a perpendicular posture, I tried my horse with a hold of his lariat; but when I brought him to the base of the ascent, he had as little idea of facing it as he would have of climbing a good wall, for, as one of the party said, "It was not only right up and down, but leant a little over." I tried to persuade him first, and then to whip him; but neither was of any use; he did not comprehend me. Not so old Sacramento (the mule), who, like a practised hod man, reared on end as soon as he was brought to the base, and commenced the escalade without an instant's hesitation, clambering frequently in a position that made me fear he should have fallen backwards, until he got to a ledge or shelf, where there was a narrow resting-place. It was quite clear from this essay that we could not calculate much on draught, when the animals would find such difficulty in getting up themselves; so we were all reconciled to the alternative of dismounting the waggons, and hauling them up piecemeal by ropes, only determining first to try one in the usual way, and, if it failed, then resort to the other mode. We occupied ourselves till a late hour in making our loads into portable packs, to get them up in the first instance, and completing all other matters—greasing the wheels, &c., &c., &c.

so far. Once past this, the rise was more gradual, and led through a skirting of enormous pine into a gap, over which, on each side, there were low peaks, capped with snow, and also deep beds of it in amongst the timber, far below the level at which we then were. There was a bubbling well springing from the rock in the hollow of the gap, the purest and most colourless water I ever saw, that made the teeth ache as it entered the mouth. This, with some tufts of grass growing in the chinks of the rock, and an enormous half-burned pine, felled, I suppose, by lightning, determined me on choosing the place for our camp, being near, too, to the summit of the first ridge.

We unpacked all the animals, leaving the horses behind, from their being indifferent mountaineers, and descended again only with the mules for the remainder of the loading, as they did not require over two hands to drive them. The rest of the men remained to aid in the first waggon attempt, which we commenced with five pair of mules, and long ropes made fast to the fore-carriage on each side, which were carried up and hitched round trees above, with men to take in the slack, and hold what they got at each stop, to prevent it pulling back the mules as they paused to breathe; from the point of the tongue, also, a rope was passed up, which twelve men hauled on, leaving next thing to nothing of draught. Under this *modus operandi* we made the trial, and got on with remarkable success, the chief annoyance and danger being occasioned by the down rolling rocks and stones, which did inflict some nasty thin outs. The fourth ascent was with the waggons—far the worst—for over and above the bad turn there were no trees within reach to coil the ropes round, leaving everything to depend on bone and sinew. Immediately after the start one of the centre span had a fall, which, if it occurred higher up, would have been ruinous—most probably, fatal; but in the second effort they got up to the turning all safe. Here it was necessary to shorten the team, otherwise the leaders would be round, out of sight, and beyond all control, just as the waggon would be in the most dangerous spot. We consequently took off three spans and got round in safety, with very little to spare, for I was curious enough to measure, and found the outside wheels traversed on an average within four inches of the giddy edge. We brought back the same team for the second waggon, and to my great grief lost a pair of them on the last ascent, the waggon at one of the stops overpowering the men and dragging the team back with awful violence. One of the mules had a hind leg broken, and the knee-joint of the other was so lacerated that the inner membrane was perfectly stripped, rendering both useless, and causing them such torture that death was a relief; so I had them both shot, which was the only bad accident we had, getting up the third waggon and cart with comparative handiness.

All up, we took off our hats and made the echoes of the Sierra Nevada acquainted with the mode of cheering in good society, which, their want of opportunities considered, they imitated with very commendable accuracy. Few would have thought, as evening closed upon us in our eyrie, sitting shivering round a pine fire that would roast an elephant, with blankets and buffalo robes on our shoulders, encircled by the hoar lineaments of winter, and the lurid flames casting their murky tinge on the spotless drapery just above us, that we were in the middle of the rabid dog-days of July; and, while our friends at home were languidly sucking sherry-cobler through their straws, we were boiling the kettle for a bubbling tumbler of hot brandy-punch, "the great wonder being," as Paddy Blake once remarked, "that it was so much *coulder* up there, so much more konvaynient to the sun."

In our innocent simplicity we now regarded ourselves as on the summit of the Great Sierra Nevada, imagining we could step on the morrow into the glittering Valley of the Sacramento, and commence business at sight. Next day, however, as we got through the gap, we descended into a valley, but not the one we set our hearts on, which did not, however, lie near so low as that we ascended from; nevertheless, we had frightful bumping and sliding before we got to the bottom. It was circumvented with snow-capped peaks, the soil being most fertile, watered by a good sized river, but where it found its exit I did not stop to inquire. We crossed it in a due west course, and wound up the opposite ridge in a serpentine maze, through a thickly-wooded forest of enormous pines peculiar to the region, and after attaining a great elevation sidled round its southern shoulder, and descended into another sheltered valley far above the level of the one we lately left. Here we halted to noon, as we saw the trail crept up a ridge to westward of us that penetrated into the regions of perpetual snow, and above which none others seemed to peep, so that we set it down as the great dividing range of the chain. We commenced our ascent at twelve o'clock, packing the saddle-horses as well as the other stock, and got on exceedingly well till we came to the snow, the nature of the side admitting of the trail taking such long winds that the inclination, except in a few places, was not excessively sharp. On coming to the snow, the ascent was so abrupt and smooth I sent twelve men ahead, picking foot-holds for the animals, the others remaining to haul on the ropes and assist the mules; and, as the wheels had no obstacles to check them or jolt over, and the mules took advantage of the holes to stick their feet in with admirable sagacity, we went up with great expedition, having all up, time enough to descend on the other side below the snowy limits to a camping-ground.

We had another piercingly cold night, and in addition to the potatory expedients usual in such extreme cases, we were driven to adopt the Indian tactics, building two enormous fires, and sleeping without tents between them. We seemed as yet to be in the centre of a mountainous system, peaks pointing up at every point of the compass, and no indication of a valley or a contiguous flat country. There were many trying ascents and descents the next day, but our progress was evidently downwards, travelling a good deal on the backs of ridges, and whenever we descended, being obliged to go straight down and up to the highest point of the opposite hill, as from the sharp peaky conical character of their formation there was no such thing as going round the side of them without overturning, unless by cutting a track for the waggons, which would be too much of a constantly recurring task. You can fancy going from the point of one sugar-loaf to another, and easily conceive the utter impracticability of taking any other course with wheeled vehicles except round the bases, which, together with being so tortuous, were absolutely impassable, from the close and matted nature of the planting, and the manner in which they were most generally cut up by the torrents that rush down from the higher ridges; otherwise those hills presented a most curious and pleasing appearance, differing in rotundity and altitude, but all shaped according to the same model, feathered round with enormous pines, which, though gigantic, appeared quite in character and keeping with the region in which they flourished. I stepped one of them that was struck down by lightning, which took ninety-three long steps, about two hundred and seventy-nine feet, though a good piece was broken off the point, which with what remained of the stump I am sure would make three hundred feet; and yet it was not one of exceeding proportions.

The hills were all composed of reddish earth, the apex of a few just tipped with snow, with scarcely any surface rocks or stones, and, except in the hollows, altogether free of brush or underwood. Scores of black-tailed deer were seen during the day, and right upon the path the trail of a grizly bear, that, from the numerous small paw prints, was followed by a large litter of cubs. Some of the men ran the trail a long distance, without being able to bring them to view. We were much inconvenienced from the want of water, all the streams being quite dry, as the full season of the thaw had passed; and not meeting a drop all day I felt anxious, when night came on, and the moon arose in her azure domain, producing a truly magnificent effect, as we travelled under her chaste cold light for many hours through those vast colonnades of nature, the lofty trees seeming to support on their extreme points the resplendent canopy above, while we, like animated atoms, moved slowly along through those stupendous arcades. It was past one o'clock when the intuitive braying of the mules proclaimed the proximity of what we desired; shortly after which we came to a slender rivulet of good water, flowing through a quick shelving hollow, very difficult to get into, and vastly more so to get out. Some of the horses, after several ineffectual efforts, finding it impracticable, commenced rambling up the bed of the stream, where a party of men were obliged to follow over two miles before a spot offered for extricating them.

From this hollow we ascended a high ridge next morning, along the back of which we travelled, in a winding course, the greater part of the day, descending perceptibly all the time, getting at intervals a glimpse of the open level space to the westward, where lay the Valley of the Sacramento; but the lofty trees circumscribed the view, and although, from the peaks behind, we saw we had made a great descent, there was no vestige or appearance of flowering shrub or luscious fruit, with which we heard the western slope overabounded; nor was there a feathered chorister to break the still silence with its notes of woodland melody.

We came, early in the afternoon, on a well-beaten narrow path, like to an Indian trail, that diverged from the path, which I had the curiosity to follow, and found it led to a nice cool-shaded stream, and through the trees could see an open grassy space, which looked to me as if it had been cleared by settlers; but on entering it I discovered it was a natural basin of rich alluvion, with a crop of grass and clover, fitter for the scythe than browsing on. I went immediately back and stopped the waggons, fixing the camp where they were, and driving the stock to the basin, where I left a guard to watch them. Immediately round the verge of the basin there were clumps of low bushy shrubs, with deep green foliage, bearing a profusion of red berries, called by the natives the Californian apple, in botany the manzanita (little apple), which sheds its bark annually, leaving a handsome polished purple surface. The Indians use the wood for arrows, and call it in their language arrow-wood. In examining those I saw an animal, much like our hare in shape, with amazing large ears, and of a light grey colour; it did not move with the fleetness of the hare, but, when frightened, gave great, high, awkward bounds, very unfavourable to progression. I also saw many bear tracks amongst the manzanita, of the fruit of which they are very fond, but was not fortunate enough to get a peep at the great original.

Before dark one of the guard came up, reporting the neighbourhood of Indians, and asking for additional strength, which I willingly accorded, for, having come through such an extent of Indian territory scathless mainly owing to our cautious watchfulness, I would not now relax on the very threshold of our destination; and it was well I did not, for a considerable body of Indians came down during the night, making an attempt to drive off the stock; and no doubt would have succeeded only for the reinforcement. The report of the shots reached the camp, and brought down all hands, but before our arrival the affair had terminated.

About eight miles of gradually descending travel from our camp brought us into a level valley, principally timbered with large white oak and the evergreen species (*Quercus ilex*); this, as we afterwards learned, is called by the miners Pleasant Valley. In the spring and earlier months I have no doubt that it abounds in features which deserve that appellation; at that time, however, everything was so parched and burned up, that although the configuration of the country left nothing to be desired, it had an aspect very incompatible with pleasurable emotions. I saw several bevies of quail, a little larger and much darker in the plumage than those peculiar to Britain; the cock, too, having a crest, like a cockatoo, which he elevated or depressed at pleasure, giving the little bird quite an imposing appearance.

At the westernmost extremity of the valley (which extends five or six miles) we encountered some Chilians on the banks of a little stream, all but dried up, looking for what we came thousands of miles in quest of. It is scarcely necessary to state we halted to noon in their neighbourhood, to have our long day-dream interpreted, and see with mortal eyes the process of picking and washing gold from the common clay. The operations just there happened to be on a limited scale; nevertheless, little as it was, it appeared marvellous to us, to see pansful of mud and dirt gathered, and, after a very short and simple species of washing, to find in the bottom of the basins a deposit of the veritable stuff itself; after which the doubts and fears, which, like the misty vapours of a summer's morning, hovered and floated over our brilliant expectations, rolled away and vanished as the golden sun became revealed. It was now no longer an exaggerated fiction about the treasures of California; there was gold, and no mistake, mixed up with the very surface-clay of the country, a part and parcel of the soil, causing our friend of Goose Creek celebrity to go at it again, cheering and hurrahing *like anything*, to the great amazement of the strangers, who evidently thought he must have escaped from restraint. One of the Chilians, who understood a little English, told us their party were in Weber Creek, about nine miles further down; and that they came away to look for new diggings. They gave us a promising account of the gold regions in general, so far as their experience went, showing that any man who was industrious would be certain to be well repaid for his labours, if his health permitted him to continue at it steadily. He also told us that provisions were scarce and dear in the diggings; and that mules and waggons were selling at enormous rates.

We went on the same evening, passing through a few miners' huts in a deep valley, which was called Weber Town. Here there was what are called, in professional phraseology, "dry diggins;" that is, where miners dig in the dry soil, picking out the particles from amongst the clay without the agency of water. Of course it must be plentiful, and in good sized grains, when the eye can detect them mixed with the red clay; and much that is in mere dust must necessarily escape in the first instance, but in the wet season many of them wash their heaps over that they dry picked before, and with very great success. I sat for half an hour by the side of a digger, watching how he worked, during which he frequently pointed me out particles in the earth, before he picked them out, that would certainly escape an unpractised eye. He admitted he averaged one and a half ounce per day, working only about six hours.

About four miles lower down, passing through a hilly country, mixedly timbered with oak and fir, we came to a branch of Weber Creek, winding through an extensive basin, openly wooded, but offering good feed along the stream. There was an excellent well, too, and a large encampment of Chilians, Mexicans, and a few Americans from the coast. Here we also came to the determination of fixing our quarters, and making our maiden essays, pending further inquiries. Although not absolutely in the Valley of Sacramento, we now regarded our great journey as accomplished, on the 26th day of July; thus having occupied one hundred and two days, including stoppages, in getting over two thousand and forty-three miles; and feeling inexpressible gratitude to that beneficent Being who carried us through all the trials and perils attendant on it with such great success. As I reviewed in my reflections that night all the dangers and difficulties inseparable from such an arduous undertaking—travelling in waggons over barren and trackless wastes, through tribes of savage Indians, fording and ferrying broad and rapid rivers, scaling giddy heights, crossing burning deserts, and sidling round frightful precipices—the small amount of casualties appeared truly astonishing; and although the hardships and privations of the road are a testing ordeal for temper, there was no misunderstanding of a serious nature occurred throughout, made up as the party was not only of strangers, but of various sects, and natives of different countries.

Being, as I may say, in the first flight of the great overland emigration, and the foremost, too, of that flight, we had many difficulties to contend with from which subsequent caravans were exempt. For instance, we had for the most part to break fresh paths, which were all the more travelable by those that followed; to make corduroy roads across morasses, dig away river banks, cut down and remove obstacles, construct rude bridges, force paths through craggy cañons, smooth the ascent of escalades, ford and ferry over broad and rapid rivers, where ferries have since been established, and carry provisions for the whole route; whereas, now, there are various replenishing depôts on the route; the great thoroughfare, too, rendering the attacks and incursions of hostile Indians less frequent and audacious; so that, in fact, what to us was a journey of perpetual doubt, difficulty, toil, and danger, can now be only properly designated as one of weariness and occasional privation.

The morning after our arrival I called all the party together, took an inventory of the effects of the two unfortunate young men who forfeited their lives in the expedition, and afterwards packed and sealed them up, writing to their friends an account of their melancholy fate; having an opportunity of forwarding the letters by one of our party, who was going to the city of Sacramento to consult a friend of his there as to whether goid digging or commerce was the most lucrative mode of employing his time.

Before taking leave of the Great Sierra Nevada for the present, it may be proper to remark that its eastern side differs materially in structure from its western flank; for while on the one the range rises in abrupt elevations, it subsides on the other in graduated lines of hills, that spread away in declining altitude until they melt into the Valley of the Sacramento. I heard much discussion in the States before I left on the contemplated railway over the continent to the Pacific, which may be possible, from the insensibly sloping nature of the country from the Kansas River to the summit of the Rocky Mountains, in which great distance their great elevation would not involve any insuperable gradient; but even admitting this, and that scientific scrutiny could tread its way through the mazes and cañons in the Great Basin, I cannot conceive how the precipitous sides of the Sierra Nevada are to be surmounted by a

CHAPTER XX.

Commence the Ascent—Horses encouraged by the Mules to make the Trial—A Displaced Rock causes the Death of one of the Horses—The Damages and Difficulties of the Task—Frightful Chasm—Pure Cold Water—How we got up the Waggons—Danger from the Rocks rolling down—Deplorable Accident—Lose two Mules—Finish the Task—Make a Call on the Echoes of the Sierra Nevada—Winter Scenery in the Dog-days—Paddy Blake's Remark—Deceived as to the Summit of the Range—Drop into a Fertile Valley—Ascents and Descents—The Region of Perpetual Snow—Snow Stairs—Cold Nights—Adopt Indian Tactics—Description of the Mountain Scenery—Measurement of some Trees—Grizly Bear and Family—Moonlight Travel in the Mountain Pines—No Fruit; no Birds—Fertile Basin—The Manzanita—Indian Foray—Pleasant Valley—Californian Quail—Chilian Gold-Diggers—The first Sample of the veritable Stuff, and no mistake—Their Account of the Diggins—Dry Diggins—Average Returns—Weber Creek—End of the Journey for the Present—Time Employed—Our grateful Feelings at its Termination—Seal up the Property of our Departed Comrades—Acquaint their Friends of their melancholy Fate—The Contemplated Railway from the States to the Pacific—Distance Table from Independence to San Francisco.

At daylight we tied light packs on all the loose animals, and drove them at the ascent, at which the horses stopped, as if they could not believe us in earnest; but when they saw the mules climbing, they also made the attempt, while we kept shouting and cracking whips below, not daring to follow them exactly, from the quantity of gravel and stones they rolled down in their efforts to get up, which eventually caused the death of one of the horses; a fragment of displaced rock coming tumbling down, hit him in the forehead, when he fell back and was killed; another horse and a mule also fell backwards, but escaped with some bad cuts and bruises. As soon as they reached the first ledge, we tightened all the packs, and commenced the next, which, being tortuous and amongst timber, was less difficult; but still very steep, and in portions excessively craggy, being much the longest of any. This we surmounted without any accident—two others (one nearly as bad as the first) still remaining. The third we also got over, after divers slips and falls, which brought us to the border of the snowy confines, having here rocky shelves to ascend, without any covering whatever, and scarcely enough of inequalities on their surface to afford any foot-holds for the animals. We had infinite trouble with the horses here before we could get them to try it, and many of them would have turned back if they dared, after they got up a bit, as they glanced tremblingly down over their shoulders. Sometimes one of them slipping would fall and come sliding down, knocking others off their legs, which it required great sprawling and floundering to regain; and others coming to their knees, remained like fixtures, fearing, if they stirred, they should come rolling down the whole way. Near the top there was a very ugly turn, round the face of a perpendicular rock, with a dreadful chasm below, through which a roaring torrent was impetuously hurrying. The loose animals passed it easily enough; but on measurement I found there were not more than seven or eight inches to spare for the waggons, should we succeed in getting them up locomotive, unless it be constructed on a *mule* power principle, of Yankee invention, the secret of which they have as yet kept to themselves. Or perhaps they design a tunnel as the mode of dealing with the obstruction; and all I can say in that event is, that if they succeed they will effectually shut *Mr. Punch's* mouth as to his great national vaunt "about having the greatest bore in the world in that of the Thames."

I will here subjoin a short table of distances, as well as I could calculate them, allowing two and a half miles per hour as the rate of travelling when the trail was good and unobstructed, and making liberal and large deductions for all delays, accidents, and stoppages, beginning my count from the frontier town of Independence:

DISTANCE TABLE FROM INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI, TO SAN FRANCISCO, ALTA CALIFORNIA.

	MILES.
From Independence to Fort Laramie	700
" Laramie to the Pacific Springs	325
" Pacific Springs to Fort Bridger	180
" Fort Bridger to Salt Lake City	112
" Salt Lake City to the head-waters of Humboldt River .	329
" Humboldt River to its Sink	290
" The Sink to the base of the Sierra Nevada . . .	157
" The Eastern base to Weber Creek (our encampment) .	115
	2048
" Weber Creek to Sacramento City	88
" Sacramento City to San Francisco, by the river . .	150
Total distance from Independence to San Francisco .	2846

END OF VOL. I.

AN

EXCURSION TO CALIFORNIA

OVER THE

PRAIRIE, ROCKY MOUNTAINS, AND GREAT
SIERRA NEVADA.

WITH A

STROLL THROUGH THE DIGGINGS AND RANCHES
OF THAT COUNTRY.

BY WILLIAM KELLY, J.P.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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EXCURSION TO CALIFORNIA.

CHAPTER I.

Geographical Sketch of California—Its Boundaries—Its Extent of Territory—Its peculiar Position—Its Rivers—Its Second Grand Division—Persia its Type as to Structure and Appearance—Italy as to Climate, Soil, and Productions—Valleys of the Sacramento and San Joaquim—Contrast between the Past and Present Aspect of the Country—What Vancouver and Humboldt found it—Its Property under the Missions—Its Productions under their Establishment—The Rivers Sacramento and San Joaquim—The Tributaries of those Rivers—Fremont's Description of the Bay of San Francisco and adjoining Country—Its Size—Mount Diavolo—Chrysopylæ—Valleys of San José and San Juan—Cuestos de los Gatos—Quicksilver Mines—Mission of Santa Clara—Strait of Carquines connects San Pablo and Suisoon Bays—Sonoma—California compared with Italy—Its unique Advantages and favourable Geographical Position—Some of Colonel Fremont's Opinions combated—The Influences of high behests on Authors.

THIS, I conceive, is the proper place for briefly adverting to the geographical position of the country for the general information of the reader, who is, for the most part, under the impression that the celebrated region of California is confined between the ranges of the Sierra Nevada and the coast range mountains. Geographically speaking, California is bounded on the north by Oregon, the 42nd degree of north latitude, being the boundary line between the two territories; on the east by the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra de los Mimbres, a continuation of the same range; on the south by Sonora and Old or Lower California; and on the west by the Pacific Ocean. Its extreme length is seven hundred miles, and its breadth close upon eight hundred miles, comprising an area of 400,000 square miles; but only a comparatively small portion of this extensive territory is fertile or fit for settlement, a mere fraction of that part lying in the Great Interior Basin, between the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada, being aught else than arid sand deserts, covered with artemesia, and wholly incapable of cultivation or reclamation; and the border between the coast range and the ocean, being also for the most part uninviting to the emigrant, save he who sits down in quest of minerals; so that I may say California, properly speaking, is confined to the valleys of the Sacramento and the San Joaquim, lying between the west flank of the Sierra Nevada and the eastern base of the coast range mountains.

In the Great Basin, besides the rivers I have before adverted to as having been met directly in my route, there is the Rio Colarado or Red River, which has a course of one thousand miles, emptying into the Gulf of California, and having for its northern tributaries Green and Grand Rivers, both of considerable volume, rising in the Rocky Mountains; and Sevier, Virgin, and Gila Rivers, which it receives near its mouth. The inhospitable region through which the Colarado flows has not even been partially explored, and little is known about the river save the vague narratives of adventurous trappers who have penetrated to its banks in pursuit of beaver, who describe it as unfit for navigable purposes from the extreme rapidity of its current, and the stupendous falls and cañons it passes in its course, running for several miles at a time in a series of roaring cataracts, so deep between the perpendicular cliffs of mountain precipices, that even the white foam of its waters are only dimly discernible in the gloomy chasms, while its thundering voice penetrates days' journeys over the echoless wastes of the surrounding deserts.

Curiosity or science may stimulate private individuals, or those in the employ of government, to trace and describe it minutely; but from the nature of the tracts in which its channel lies, its waters, even if navigable, could not be subservient to useful or civilising ends. The Utah and Timpanagos discharge themselves into the Utah Lakes on the east, after gathering their copious streams in the adjoining parts of the Wah-Satch and Timpanagos Mountains. Nicolett River rising south, in the long range of the Wah-Satch Mountains, falls into a lake of its own name, after making an arable valley of 200 miles in length, through a mountainous country. Salmon-trout River rising in the west, running down from the Sierra Nevada, falls into Pyramid Lake after a course of about 100 miles from its source; one-third of the valley is a pine timbered country, and for the remainder of the way it runs through very rocky naked ridges. It is remarkable for the abundance and excellence of its salmon-trout, and presents some good ground for cultivation. Walker River, a clear, handsome stream, nearly

100 miles long, coming, like the preceding, down the eastern flank of the Sierra Nevada, forms a lake of its own near its base: it contains salmon-trout, and forms some bottoms of good arable land. Owen River, issuing from the Sierra Nevada on the south, is a large bold stream, about 120 miles long, gathering its waters in the Sierra Nevada, and, flowing to the southward, forms a lake about fifteen miles long at the base of the mountain. At a medium stage it is four or five feet deep—in places fifteen—wooded with willow and cotton wood, and makes continuous bottoms of fertile land, at intervals rendered marshy by springs and small affluents from the mountains: the water of the lake in which it terminates has an unpleasant smell and bad taste, but around its shores are found small streams of pure water and good grass. The only lakes of the Great Basin, except those that constitute the Sinks of their respective rivers, are Salt, Utah, and Pyramid Lakes, which latter takes its name from a very high pyramidical island in its centre. The mountains have already been described in Colonel Fremont's account of the Great Basin.

"West of the Sierra Nevada (I quote from the same authority), and between that mountain and the sea, is the second grand division of California, and the only part to which the name applies, in the current language of the country. It is the occupied and inhabited part, and so different in character, so divided by the mountain wall of the Sierra from the Great Basin above, as to constitute a region to itself, with a structure and configuration, a soil, a climate, and productions of its own; and as Northern Persia may be referred to as some type of the former, so may Italy be referred to as some point of comparison for the latter. North and south this region embraces about 10 deg. of latitude; from 32 deg. where it touches the peninsula of California, to 42 deg. where it bounds Oregon. East and west from the Sierra Nevada to the sea, it will average, in the middle parts, 150 miles; in the northern, 200—giving an area of about 100,000 square miles.

"Looking westward from the summit of the Sierra, the main feature presented is the long, low, broad valley of the Sacramento and San Joaquim Rivers, the two valleys forming one 500 miles long and fifty broad, lying along the base of the Sierra, and bounded to the west by the low range of coast mountains, which separates it from the sea. Long dark lines of timber indicate the streams, and bright spots mark the intervening plains; lateral ranges, parallel to the Sierra Nevada and the coast, make the structure of the country, and break it into a surface of valleys and mountains—the valleys a few hundred, the mountains to 4000 feet above the level of the sea. These form greater masses, and become more elevated to the north, where some peaks, as the Shastl, enter the regions of perpetual snow, stretched along the mild coast of the Pacific, with a general elevation in its plains and valleys of only a few hundred feet above the level of the sea, and backed by the long and lofty wall of the Sierra Nevada, mildness and geniality may be assumed as the characteristic of its climate. The inhabitant of corresponding latitudes on the Atlantic side of the continent, can with difficulty conceive the soft air and southern productions in the same latitude in the maritime regions of Upper California. The singular beauty and purity of the sky in the south of this region is characterised by Humboldt as a rare phenomenon, and all travellers realise the truth of this description.

"The present condition of the country affords but slight data for forming correct opinions of the agricultural capacity and fertility of the soil. Vancouver found at the Mission of San Benaventura, in 1792, latitude 34 deg. 16 min., apples, pears, plums, figs, oranges, grapes, peaches, and pomegranates growing together, with plantain, banana, cocoa-nut, sugar-cane, and indigo, all yielding fruit in abundance, and of excellent quality. Humboldt mentions the olive oil of California as equal to that of Andalusia, and the wine like that of the Canary Islands. At present but little remains of this high and varied cultivation which had been attained at the Mission, under the mild and paternal administration of "the fathers." The docile character of the Indians was made available for labour, and thousands were employed in the fields, the orchards, and the vineyards. At present but little of this cultivation is seen; the fertile valleys overgrown with wild mustard, vineyards and olive orchards decayed and neglected, are among the remaining vestiges. Only in some places do we see evidences of what the country is capable. At San Benaventura we found the olive-trees, in January, bending under the weight of neglected fruit; and the Mission of San Louis Obispo (latitude 35 deg.) is still distinguished for the excellence of its olives—considered larger and finer than those of the Mediterranean. The productions of the south differ from those of the north and the middle. Grapes, olives, and

Indian corn have been its staples, with many assimilated fruits and grains. Tobacco has been recently introduced; and the uniform summer-heat that follows the wet season, and is uninterrupted by rain, would make the southern country well adapted for cotton. Wheat is the first production of the north, where it always constituted the principal cultivation of Missions. This promises to be the grain-growing region of California. The moisture of the coast seems particularly suited for the potato and vegetables common to the United States, which grow to an uncommon size.

"Perhaps few parts of the world can produce in such perfection so great a variety of fruits, and vegetables, and grains, as the large and various regions enclosing the Bay of San Francisco, and drained by its waters. A view of the map will show that region and its great extent, comprehending the entire valleys of the Sacramento and San Joaquim, and the whole western slope of the Sierra Nevada. These valleys are one, discriminated only by the names of the rivers which traverse it. It is a single valley—a single geographical formation—near five hundred miles long, lying at the western base of the Sierra Nevada, and between it and the coast range of mountains, and stretching across the head of the Bay of San Francisco, with which a delta of twenty-five miles connects it. The two great rivers, the Sacramento and the San Joaquim, rise at opposite ends of this long valley, receive numerous mountain streams, many of them bold rivers, from the Sierra Nevada, become themselves navigable rivers, flow towards each other, meet half-way, and enter the Bay of Francisco together in the region of tide water, making a continuous water-line from one end to the other."

The other rivers are all tributaries of those main ones, with the exception of Trinity, which disembogues into the Pacific Ocean, near the confines of Oregon. The principal affluents of the Sacramento are the Rio de los Plumas, the Juba, the North, Middle, and South Forks (as they are called), and the Rio de los Americanos, most of which are partly navigable, flowing from the western flank of the Sierra Nevada, and running in large portions of their courses through fertile land, over-abounding in salmon, and rich in golden deposits. Those of the San Joaquim are the Mo-kel-um-ne, the Stanislaus, the Rio de los Coscumnes, the Yo-wal-um-ne, the Aux-um-nes, and the Tulare Lakes River, one of the largest and handsomest in the valley, being one hundred yards wide, and having, perhaps, a larger portion of fertile land than any other. Like the affluents of the Sacramento, they flow down from the Sierra and are partially navigable, abounding in salmon and golden treasures. There is no system of lakes in this portion of California, the few that exist not being of such dimensions as to render them worthy of that appellation, the entire drainage of the immense valley being carried in quick copious streams by the rivers above enumerated, and their several smaller tributaries into the main ones, and thence into the Bay of San Francisco, in its upper estuary called Suisoon Bay.

Fremont thus describes the Bay of San Francisco:—"It has been celebrated from the time of its first discovery as one of the finest in the world, and is justly entitled to that character even under the seaman's view of a mere harbour; but when all the accessory advantages which belong to its fertile, picturesque, dependent country; mildness and salubrity of climate; connexion with the great interior valley of the Sacramento and San Joaquin; its vast resources for ship timber, grain and cattle—when these advantages are taken into account with its geographical position on the line of communication with Asia, it rises into an importance far above a mere harbour, and deserves particular notice in any account of maritime California. Its latitudinal position is that of Lisbon—its climate is that of southern Italy. Settlements on it for more than half a century attest its healthfulness; bold shores and mountains give it grandeur; the extent and fertility of its dependent country give it great resources for agriculture, commerce, and population.

"The Bay of San Francisco is separated from the sea by low mountain ranges, looking from the peaks of the Sierra Nevada. The coast mountains present an apparently continuous line, with only a single gap resembling a mountain pass. This is the only water communication from the coast to the interior country; approaching from the sea the coast, it presents a bold outline. On the south the bordering mountains come down in a narrow ridge of broken hills, terminating in a precipitous point, against which the sea breaks heavily. On the northern side the mountain presents a bold promontory, rising in a few miles to a height of two or three thousand feet. Between these points is the strait, about a mile broad in the narrowest part, and five miles long from the sea to the bay. Passing through this gate[*] the bay opens to the right and left, extending in each direction about thirty-five miles, having a total length of more than seventy miles, and a coast of two hundred and seventy-five miles. It is divided by straits and projecting points into three separate bays, of which the northern two are called San Pablo and Suisoon Bays. Within, the view presented is a mountainous country, the bay resembling an interior lake of deep water, lying between parallel ranges of mountains. Islands which have the bold character of the shores, some mere masses of rock, others grass covered, rising to the height of three and eight hundred feet, break its surface, and add to its picturesque appearance. Directly fronting the entrance, mountains a few miles from the shore rise about two thousand feet above the level of the water, crowned by a forest of lofty cypress, which is visible from the sea, and make a conspicuous landmark for vessels entering the bay. Behind, the rugged peak of Mount Diavolo, nearly four thousand feet high, overlooks the surrounding country of the bay and the San Joaquim. The immediate shores of the bay derives, from its proximate and opposite relation to the sea, the name of Contra Costa (counter coast or opposite coast).

"It presents a varied character of rugged and broken hills, rolling and undulating land, and rich alluvial shores, backed by fertile and wooded ranges suitable for towns, villages, and farms, with which it is beginning to be dotted. A low alluvial bottom land, several miles in breadth, with occasional open woods of oak, borders the foot of the mountains around the southern arm of the bay, terminating in a breadth of twenty miles in the fertile valley of St. Joseph, a narrow plain of rich alluvial soil, lying between ranges from two to three thousand feet high. The valley is openly wooded with groves of oak, free from any underbrush, and, after the spring rains, covered with grass. Taken in connexion with the Valley of San Juan, with which it forms a continuous plain, it is fifty-five miles long, and from one to twenty broad, opening into smaller valleys amongst the hills. At the head of the bay it is twenty miles broad, and about the same at the southern end, where the soil is beautifully fertile, covered in the summer with four or five varieties of wild clover. In many places it is overgrown with wild mustard, growing to ten or twelve feet high, in almost impenetrable fields, through which roads are made, like lanes.

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[*] Called Chrysopylæ (golden gate) on the map, on the same principle that the harbour of Byzantium (Constantinople afterwards) was called Chrysoceras (golden horn), the form of the harbour and its advantages of commerce; and that, before it became an entrepôt for Eastern commerce, suggested the name to the Greek founders of Byzantium. The form of the entrance into the Bay of San Francisco and its advantages for commerce (Asiatic inclusive) suggests the name which is given to this entrance.

"On both sides the mountains are fertile, wooded, or covered with grasses and scattered trees. On the west it is protected from the chilly influence of the north-west winds by the Cuestos de los Gatos (wild cat ridge), which separates it from the coast. This is a grassy, timbered mountain, watered with small streams, and wooded on both sides with many varieties of trees and shrubbery, the heavier forest pine and cypress occupying the western slope. Timber and shingle are now obtained from this mountain, and one of the recently discovered quicksilver mines is on the eastern side of the mountain, near the Pueblo of San José. This range terminates in the south in the Anno Nuevo point of Monterey Bay, and in the north declines into a broken ridge of hills, about five miles wide, between the bay and the sea, and having the town of San Francisco on the bay shore near its northern extremity, sheltered from the cold winds and fog of the sea, and having a soil of remarkable fertility. The Valley of St. Joseph (San José) is capable of producing in great perfection many fruits and grains that do not thrive on the coast or its immediate vicinity, without taking into consideration the extraordinary yields which have sometimes occurred. The fair average product of wheat is estimated at fifty-fold. The Mission establishments of Santa Clara and San José, in the north of the valley, were formerly, in the prosperous days of the Mission, distinguished for the superiority of their wheat crops.

" The slope of alluvial land continues around the eastern shores of the bays, intersected with small streams, in which good landing and deep water, with advantageous positions between the sea and the interior of the country, indicate for future settlement. The Strait of Carquines, about one mile broad, and eight to ten fathoms deep, connects the San Pablo and Suisoon Bays. Around these bays smaller valleys open into the bordering country, and some of the streams have launch navigation, which serve to convey the produce to the bay. Missions and large farms were established at the head of navigation on these streams, which are favourable sites for towns or villages.

"The country around Suisoon Bay presents low smooth ridges and rounded hills, clothed with wild oats, and more or less openly wooded on their summits. Approaching its northern shores from Sonoma, it assumes, though in a state of nature, a cultivated and beautiful appearance; wild oats cover its continuous fields, and herds of wild cattle, and bands of wild horses, are scattered over low hills and partly isolated ridges, where blue mists and openings amongst the abruptly terminating hills indicate the neighbourhood of the bay. The Suisoon is connected with an expansion of the river, formed by the junction of the Sacramento and the San Joaquim, which enter the Francisco Bay at the same latitude nearly as the mouth of the Tagus at Lisbon. A delta of twenty-five miles in length, divided into islands by channels, connects the bay with the valleys of the Sacramento and the San Joaquim, into the mouth of which the tide flows, and which enter the bay together as one river.

"Such is the bay and proximate country; it is not a mere indentation of the coast, but a little sea to itself, connected with the ocean by a defensible gate, opening out between seventy and eighty miles to the right and left, upon a breadth of fifteen, deep enough for the largest ships; with bold shores suitable for towns and settlements, and fertile adjacent country for cultivation. The head of the bay is about forty miles from the sea, and there connects it with the noble valleys of the Sacramento and the San Joaquim. Thus California, below the Sierra Nevada, is about the extent of Italy, geographically considered, in all the extent of Italy from the Alps to the termination of the peninsula; it is of the same length, same breadth, and consequently the same area (about one hundred thousand square miles), and presents much similarity of climate and productions. Like Italy, it lies north and south, and presents some differences of climate and productions—the effect of the difference of latitude, proximity of high mountains, and configuration of the coast. Like Italy, it is a country of mountains and valleys; different from it in internal structure, it is formed for unity, its large rivers being concentric, and its large valleys appurtenant to the great central Bay of San Francisco, within the area of whose waters the dominating power must be found. Geographically, the position of California is one of the best in the world, lying on the coast of the Pacific Ocean, fronting Asia, on the line of an American road to Asia, and possessed of advantages to give full effect to its geographical position."

I quote thus liberally from Fremont, because he is the very highest and most correct authority on most matters connected with the new and unsettled portions of the North American continent. But, while I admit that everything he lays down or asserts, so far as geography or science are involved, is as correct as possible, I beg leave respectfully to question his opinions as to the agricultural resources of California, the salubrity of its climate,* and general healthfulness. The soil, I admit, is of an unsurpassing quality, made up of constituent qualities and ingredients, capable of producing any crop only for the adverse operation of the seasons, which keep it saturated, and in most places submerged in water, from November until April, rendering it physically impossible to prepare the land, much less to sow the seed during that period; and then before July it is so baked and cracked under a hot and cloudless sun, that not only is all further vegetation arrested, but everything above ground is crisped, and ready to fall into powder at the touch; while the streams that might be supposed available for irrigation are, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, completely dry. Thus there would be only three months to plough and harrow, sow and reap—a period infinitely too circumscribed for the maturation of any grain, and most vegetables. There are a few highly-favoured localities where, I believe, wheat might be raised; but even in those places, peopled as they now are with enterprising settlers from the old country, I did not see a single patch of grain, and only heard vague missionary traditions of it once having been grown there.

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* When I first arrived in California, before I had extensive opportunities of observation, I wrote to a leading London journal describing the climate as genial, and generally suitable for those afflicted with pulmonary complaints; however, a lengthened sojourn has given me reason to change that opinion.

But, after all, the state of agricultural advancement and prosperity at the Missions noticed by Vancouver and Humboldt, is no criterion to go by in ascribing a general character of similar fertility to an entire country of such vast extent as California. It would be quite as fair to assert that a whole kingdom must be educated and enlightened because in some few of its provinces or subdivisions there are colleges or seminaries that turn out accomplished scholars. We all know that when men are accorded an unlimited choice, the instigations of human nature will prompt them to make the most promising selections; and when to the dominion of free will is superadded the proverbial acuteness and discrimination of the Jesuits, since the days of Ignatius Loyola, it may be taken for granted that they picked out the most fertile and favoured positions in California for the foundation of their establishments, and, with their accustomed energy and perseverance, taxed and stimulated the soil in those pet positions to the utmost extent of its fecundity, taking care that sources of irrigation were contiguous and available, to make up for the short-comings of nature in its ministrations of fertilising moisture. So, I repeat, it is unfair to parade the productions of those picked and forced gardens, which, taken together, would not constitute a respectable parish, as evidence that the whole wing of a great continent is capable of yielding similar productions.

I will go with Colonel Fremont in saying, that the great natural wall of the Sierra Nevada produces many modifying influences on the climate, owing to which tropical fruits may be produced at high northern latitudes. But, according to my experience, my humble opinion is, that California must ever be mainly dependent on the States, Oregon, Chili, and the Sandwich Islands, for its supply of bread-stuffs and the other great vegetable staples of existence; as to the climate, there is only one opinion amongst the people now resident there, which is, that it is highly unhealthy. I was not surprised to find it so in the mines, where people were working hard under unusual circumstances and severe privations; but even in the cities and towns robust health is the exception, there being a regular invalid passenger trade between Francisco and Honolulu, while burial-grounds in every settled locality extend their dimensions with a fearful rapidity, that is quite as convincing as the most regular bills of mortality—strong confirmation of both of which opinions will appear in the course of the work. But Colonel Fremont wrote at the instance of the United States' Government, who were anxious to array their newly-acquired territory in all the choicest attributes of nature; and I believe it is generally admitted (even in the case of Sir Walter Scott's "Life of Napoleon") that men, acting under high behests, are liable to adopt the partialities and prejudices of their patrons. Even painters of celebrity have been known to jeopardise their fame as faithful delineators, in order to suit the views of parasites who had flattered a dear friend to sit for his portrait.

CHAPTER II.

How our Party split up into Sections—Our Apprenticeship to Gold-washing—The Mode of Proceeding—Average Returns—Cradles or Gold-washers; how constructed—Visit the Mill—The System of transacting Business there—Arrival of Mr. Goodyear and a Pack Mule Train—The Sad News they bring—Dandy Diggers—Their Tools, and the Way in which they used them—Ungenerous Conduct of the Americans towards the Chilians—The Weber Diggings—Miners' Laws—Summary Punishment—Sickness in the Weber Diggings—Leave my Companions on a Tour—Lower Weber Diggings—A Californian Ranchero—Charge for Grazing—Returns on the Lower Weber—Dysentery there—Cutaneous Poison—The Great Canon Diggings—A Description of them—Sly Trick—The Trade of the Canon.

WHILE on the road we were a sort of joint-stock company, but now that we reached the sphere of operations we divided into different parties, some starting for the cities to build up their fortunes, others remaining to accumulate them in the mines. Fifteen of the latter remained, in three independent parties of five each, but though our gains were distinct, we erected our quarters beside each other, selected our working locations in the same neighbourhood, and communicated candidly to one another all the information we could collect. We spent a novitiate of three days amongst the Chilians and Mexicans, looking on at their operations, and getting odd lessons in the art of imparting the rotatory motion to the contents of the wash-basin, so as to surge a portion of the liquid mud over the edge at each sweep, until nothing but the gold and black sand remained; the process being simply, after throwing aside the surface-clay or sand, to loosen the hard packed soil with picks, scrape it with a horn-scoop into a basin, then dip it until it became saturated with water, when you sink your hands into the mass, removing the stones, and in searching for them mixing all into a thick fluid. This you cause to go round and round, some of the top escaping at each revolution; more water is occasionally taken in, until all the earthy particles are carried away; then comes the process of separating the black sand, which, being of great specific gravity, requires great care and nicety, else some of the finer particles of gold may escape with it. But in places where it particularly abounds, and the gold runs small, the separation is effected by the agency of quicksilver, simply by pouring it amongst the black sand and gold dust, adding some water, and mixing it about; the quicksilver, in its great affinity for the precious metal, gathering all the particles it comes in contact with, until it becomes a little massive tangible heap, devoid of its elusive character, when it is put into a buckskin cloth, and the quicksilver separated by being compressed through the pores of the leather, the slight portion remaining adhered to the gold being evaporated on a heated pan or shovel.

An expert hand, in anything like ready ground, can gather and wash a panful every ten minutes, and the place that does not yield a quarter of a dollar to the panful is not considered worth working by that process, though it would give 1 dol. 50 c. per hour, or twelve dollars per day of eight hours' working—good wages for those who at home would have considered it a fair weekly wage, at twelve hours' constant labour each day, but vastly too small for the large class "who, just for a lark," come out to rough it a bit, and get enough in a few months to enable them to set up as fine gentlemen for life. But places that would not pay according to the above estimate with pans can be made to yield satisfactorily with cradles, or washers as some call them, because so much larger a proportion of work can be got through in that machine, which is constructed by making a semicircular trough, say five feet long by sixteen inches in diameter, and placing on the upper end of the top a perforated iron or copper plate, eighteen inches long, the exact breadth of the trough, with a raised wooden rim of four inches, and, immediately under it, tending to the centre of the cradle, a bar or ridge about half an inch high, with another of a similar description at the extreme end, where an upright handle (if the cradle is of a large size) about four feet long is stuck, by which the motion is imparted. In smaller ones, where the number of the mess is limited, the rocker sits at the end of the cradle, rocking with one hand and pouring in the water with the other on the dirt which is thrown on the plate, and as the gold and gravel are separated from the stones, and washed down, the current carries the gravel over the bars, while the gold, being of so much greater gravity, is intercepted, the lower bar arresting any that by a jolt or awkward shake may have got over the upper one.

At the end of three days we acquired a sufficient proficiency to set up for ourselves, in a place kindly selected by a Chilian acquaintance, and succeeded in gathering a daily average of a good ounce to each hand—rather better than half what our more experienced neighbours were making; but as our provisions were running low, I made one of a party to go to the Mill, which town takes its name from a saw-mill being its nucleus, in the direction of which the gold was first discovered. It is situated on the south fork of the Sacramento, about forty-five miles from the embarcadero, as the city of Sacramento is called by the miners, and being a point from which several rich and favourite diggings radiate, is fast growing into a large and flourishing place, with a goodly proportion of stone buildings, from the convenience of quarries. I here got my first sample of Californian prices, in paying fifty cents "for a drink," as a small glass of bad brandy is designated, and in a like ratio for everything else.

Almost every house was a tap, and contained an apartment consecrated to the god of gambling, where a parcel of hawks, with whetted beaks, were lying in wait for green pigeons; and although improvident miners were invariably relieved of their gold-dust in those nefarious haunts, they punctually came every Saturday evening, as if under the spell of some mystical fascination, to deposit their gold in those sinking-funds, spending their week's earnings and their Sundays in this insensible and reprehensible manner, first reduced to a state of partial stupefaction by adulterated drink, and then cheated according to the most compendious mode of modern greeking. I found, too, in my limited transactions, that the malpractices of the Millites were not confined to the gaming-table, false weights and measures being consistently associated with false dice, which told with double effect against the purchaser, dust being the circulating medium; for he had his goods weighed with light weights, and his gold weighed with heavy ones. I, of course, bought as sparingly as I could, determined to go to Sacramento for further supplies. I brought, however, with me a small cradle, for which I paid the moderate sum of 3 oz., 48 dollars, two of which a tradesman could make in a day, and all the materials of both would not cost, even at the Mill, more than 1 oz., 16 dollars, which left a very handsome margin for remuneration.

The country between our encampment and the Mill is a succession of hills and dales, tapering down from the Sierra Nevada, moderately wooded, with great numbers of quail, some deer, and hares. I fully expected to have seen some handsome varieties of the feathered tribe, but there were no birds of any gaudier tints of plumage than my old acquaintance the crow, the blackbird, and the magpie, who seemed to be all "chips of the old block" peculiar to Britain.

On my return to camp, I found Mr. Goodyear's caballada, together with a pack-mule train, had arrived, the latter in a wretched state, and reporting, even at that early date, great sufferings on Humboldt River. By means of the cradle we augmented our daily income by half an ounce, and on one day actually divided fifty dollars per man; but this was a most unusual amount, and occurred by our meeting a peculiar shelve, where the deposit was very thick. By the end of the week another pack-mule company came in, and several fresh hands from the coast, all the latter of the amateur or dandy class of diggers, in kid gloves and patent leather boots, with flash accoutrements and fancy implements, their polished picks with mahogany handles, and shiny shovels, resembling that presentation class of tools given to lords, baronets, and members of parliament, to lay a first stone, or turn the first sod on a new line of railway. It was good fun to see those "gents" nibbling at the useless soil, and then endeavouring to work their pans, with outstretched hands, lest they should slobber their ducks. Subsequently I used to meet numbers of that school wending back to the coast from the various diggings, "damning the infernal gold," and "cutting the beastly diggins" in disgust.

Nine-tenths of the new arrivals were Americans, who resorted, as we did in the first instance, to the Chilians and Mexicans for instruction and information, which they gave them with cheerful alacrity; but as soon as Jonathan got an inkling of the system, with peculiar bad taste and ungenerous feeling he organised a crusade against those obliging strangers, and ran them off the creek at the pistol mouth. Our messes were canvassed to take part in the affair, but declined becoming engaged in any such proceeding, which had like to have led to our own expulsion likewise; in fact, the Yankees regarded every man but a native American as an interloper, who had no right to come to California to pick up the gold of the free and enlightened citizens.

The gold at the Weber diggings was all in moderate sized particles, and of particularly fine and pure quality, less capriciously deposited than in most of the other diggings I visited, the average returns of all being tolerably uniform where similar industry was employed. All hands fixed themselves on the borders of the creek for the convenience of water, but I found the dirt (the technical name of the soil subjected to the washing ordeal) on the hill-side, at a good elevation above the stream or its winter water-marks, fully as rich as that along its banks. I even carried dirt in a kerchief from the very hill tops, and got a good return from it—a proof that it was not altogether scattered over the country by the influence of the floods, the prevalent opinion amongst the earlier miners.

In a comparatively short time we had a large community on the creek, which led to rows and altercations about boundaries, that eventuated in an arrangement, entered into by unanimous agreement, that each person should have ten feet square, which, multiplied by the number of the mess, gave the limits of the allotment in a particular location; it did not debar a man, however, from moving from one site and fixing on another, and as long as any one left his tools in the space his claim was respected. There was another branch of legislation soon called for to repress a system of thieving that was fast spreading; but the code of the famous Judge Lynch was unanimously adopted, and under its oral provisions any person caught "in flagrante delicto" was shot down without ceremony, or subjected to any other summary punishment the detector might prefer. I heard of several cases of instantaneous execution, and saw at the Weber one lad shorn of the rims of his ears, and seared deeply in the cheek with a red-hot iron, for the theft of a small coffee-tin. I never took part in any of those proceedings, nor did any of the company with which I was associated; but while disapproving of the modicum of punishment, and the manner of putting it in force, I must admit that some very stringent measures were necessary to keep in check the lawless and abandoned characters that flocked to the mines.

The weather was particularly fine all the time I remained at the Weber, the days bright and warm, the nights cloudless and without dew; but dysentery made its appearance in its most malignant form, soon prostrating the majority of the miners, carrying off many, and reducing all who were attacked to the lowest possible state of bodily feebleness. I had a turn, and found cayenne pepper in large doses checked it effectually, while with others it produced no visible effect, owing, I should say, to the want of self-denial in diet. Its origin was attributed to the use of fresh beef, though in coming over the plains I never remarked that fresh meat had any such tendencies, even when, as on the Platte, we lived on it for days together, using it largely at each of three meals.

The second week in August I took leave of my companions, for the purpose of travelling over the country, visiting the different mines, and comparing their various returns, as well as looking for a solution of the phenomenon of finding gold in more or less quantities at every elevation in the extensive region of its field. I employed a half-caste Californian (who make excellent vaquerous herders of stock) to help me to drive my proportion of mules and horses to a rancho on the Sacramento, between our camp and the city, and on my way down struck the Weber again eight miles lower below a cañon, where it formed a pond, or small lake, on the margin of which there was a solitary tent and a small party of three at work, amongst whom was a Cornish man, who welcomed me as a countryman, and invited me to stop a day or two; an invitation I gladly accepted, as the grass was good about the little lake. In the course of the evening, Mr. Williams, the proprietor of another rancho on the Sacramento, arrived with a train of vaquerous on his way up to meet the emigration, and either buy their stock, or canvass for the grazing. He took charge of mine there, and then giving me a receipt, and saving me the trouble of going down, as I wished to visit all the mines in that district before leaving. I kept a mule for my own riding, and was thus enabled to get rid of my aid after a short employ of one day. Mr. Williams's charge was two dollars a month per head for pasturage, and two dollars per month for insurance, which my Cornish friend advised me to pay by all means, as horse and mule stealing was becoming most prevalent, the temptation being very great, from the enormous price given below for animals by emigrants arriving by the Isthmus and Cape Horn route, who could not stir without them.

I spent that evening and next day with Mr. Jones's company, who was a practised hand at the business, and set his party to work more systematically than any other

I had yet seen. They took their dirt from a steep incline considerably above the winter level of the stream, in a stratum of hard packed dry bluish clay, almost as hard as rock, with a slight surface covering of earth, which yielded prodigiously, giving seventeen ounces for their day's work, nearly 100 dollars per hand, while Jones admitted to me that in some days they divided as much as one pound each. He showed me, by washing panfuls gathered at different spots about, that the deposits were pretty general and alike, and pressed me to take up my quarters beside him, which I was not prepared to do at the time; but I wrote a note to my friends above by the returning Californian, recommending them to shift their quarters as soon and as quietly as they could—advice they followed promptly and with great profit.

Dysentery found its way into Mr. Jones's small company, one of his comrades being only recently recovered from a severe attack, Jones himself suffering from the effects of poison, which produced an angry and most annoying cutaneous affliction. It is caught from a vine that grows amongst the brush and shrubs, and is most likely to lay hold when the pores are exuding perspiration. Some people, from peculiar constitutional tendencies, are not susceptible of its infection, while others, again, are not only predisposed to catch its virus, but suffer dreadfully from the itching and inflammation, which spread with great rapidity over the body, thickening the skin, and raising it in large hives like a confluent pock, that become highly irritated by the slightest contact. Washing the skin well with the soap-root, and then bathing it in salt and water, helps to allay the irritation; but to eradicate its effects thoroughly, it is necessary to adopt a low scale of regimen, and take cooling medicines.

I took leave of my friend Jones and my countryman Williams, and went to another digging, called the Great Cañon, lying north-east from the Weber, where I got into a chain of lofty hills, thinly wooded with fir and white oak (*Quercus longelanda*), steeper on the sides than I ever before saw mere clay hills, the Great Cañon lying between two parallel ranges, at a depth of several hundred feet, shaped like a wedge, and so narrow below that there was barely standing-room: the gold was all at the bottom, for the slopes were too quick to afford it a resting-place. There was a large Spanish camp, or settlement, adjacent when the first American diggers arrived, who were said to have gathered vast quantities; but even then there was quite enough to repay hard work very liberally. From the nature of the place, it did not admit of operations on a large scale at any one place. Four-fifths of those I saw working there were doing so individually, with pans, using most generally large bowie-knives, with which they picked the gold from the crevices of the rocks in the bed of the stream, then almost dry, and scratching the gravelly soil from amongst the roots of the overhanging trees, which was generally rich in deposits. It was one continuous string of men, single file, throughout its entire length (about four miles), all admitting they were doing well, so far as acquisition was concerned, but complaining of their health and bad air, as no refreshing breeze could ever visit them at the bottom, and the labour of going up and down morning and evening would be too great to permit of their erecting their camps above. I stopped one night in the cañon, but could not catch any sleep, from the sultry, suffocating effects of the confined atmosphere.

The gold at the Great Cañon ran both larger and smaller than on the Weber, and was associated with large quantities of fine black sand, which the miners—most of whom were raw hands—blew off from the gold, in their anxiety to arrive at the final process. But a keen old blade turned their impatience to account, by shamming decrepitude, and pretending that in his weakly state, being unequal to the toil of mining, he was compelled to resort to the poor and profitless branch of gathering the black sand, which he sold as a substitute for emery; in pursuance of which trade he went about in the evening with a large bag and a tin tray, requesting the "green 'uns" to blow their black sand on to it, returning to his tent with his daily burden, when, by the agency of quicksilver, he secured double the average of the hardest working miner in the cañon. I saw the old lad going circuit the evening I was there, as his game was not then discovered, though I remarked to Dr. S——k, with whom I stayed, that I was certain he carried away large quantities of gold-dust in the sand.

At each end of the cañon there was a calico shanty, called a grocery, the great staples of which were infamous brandy and corrosive alcohols, that would burn through the peritonœum of a rhinoceros; while amongst the glasses were several packs of dirty cards, with which the rehearsals were nightly gone through in preparation for the grand affair at the Mill on the Saturday night, for distance was no object in those weekly reunions.

CHAPTER III.

Leave for the South Fork—Tricks of the Coyotes—Join a Party going there—Their Charge for Victuals—Miners and their Operations at the American Fork—Average Returns—Kanaka Diving—Mining Monopoly Question—Jealousy towards Foreigners—American Tactics—Mining Morality—Adulteration of Provisions—Visit the Middle and North Forks—General Average at these Diggings—Flash Company—Their Proceedings—The Jealous Epidemic—American Trickery and Avarice—How the Affair terminated—Shade of National Character—Mr. Smith's narrow Escape—Dysentery—Leave for the Mormon Island Diggings—Description of the Country—Sleep in the Shanty of a Sydney Acquaintance—How he got to that Colony and out of it—His other Quests—The Valley of the Sacramento—Its Appearance—Mormon Island, and the Miners and Mining there—General Observations on the Golden Deposits—Mr. Brackenridge's Remarks touching the Theory of its Formation.

FROM the Great Cañon* I went to the South Fork of the Rio de los Americanos, starting early in the morning, but taking a wrong trail, which led me into the hills, where neither mines nor groceries were to be met with, I not only lost my dinner, but had to go supperless to bed under a white oak, afraid to sleep lest the Coyotes should take liberties with me in my unconscious moments. The mischievous brutes kept barking and howling about my couch all night, and succeeded in eating away the raw hide lariat by which I had my mule tethered, so that when I sought him at daylight I found he had rambled away; but following up the line-mark of the lariat, which was

*After leaving the Weber diggings, of those at the Great Cañon, Kelly went to ~~another~~ them for a short time. — Ed.

apparent in some places, I brought him to view after a good two hours' hunt, with my saddle, bridle, and blanket on my back, and soon after descried three men driving pack-mules, to whom I went up to enquire my route, finding, to my great gratification, they were going to the same destination with provisions. I gladly joined them, getting some biscuit and rancid bacon to break my long fast, with a glass of bitter brandy to wash it down, at the moderate cost of two dollars, which, it strikes me, eclipses the tariff of the Clarendon or Mivart's for that meal.

We reached the bar where the principal diggings are situated before night, after some ascents and descents very little inferior in rugged quickness to those of the pass of the Sierra Nevada. Great numbers of miners were located there, and some large associated companies with considerable capital, employed in turning branches of the river, having several Indians and Kanakas at work. I did not await the result of those ambitious operations, which would occupy a long time; but by the returns per pan, I should say they must have been paid well, for I think they would average twenty dollars per day, according to my own experience, during three days, in which time I took out with my pan fifty-four dollars, without working full time either. The particles here were all of a good size, with occasional large specimens, and handsome quartz amalgamations. I saw some Kanakas (who are perhaps the most expert divers in the world) go down and bring up fine chunks, which suggested the construction of a dredging machine; but it could not be got to work with effect, from the inequalities of the bottom. Diving-bells were also thought of, but I never saw any in use.

There was a question raised there amongst the Americans themselves, which led to much angry feeling, being an objection on the part of one class, that large companies should have the privilege of employing Indians or any other labour, taking advantage of their capital to engage a great number, staking off a space for each hand, whether an employer or not, and thus establishing a system of monopoly. There were several "extensive jawing matches" on the subject, without leading to any arrangement during my sojourn; but I know that afterwards it was not permitted in any of the mines to stake off allotments for employed hands, and in some, even the hiring of them was altogether interdicted.

The jealousy towards foreigners was very strong indeed, the Americans calling out for the enforcement of that order for their expulsion which General Smith had issued, declaring he would not require any troops to carry it out, as they would act as volunteers on the occasion. This feeling I could see was especially levelled at the English, while they condescended a most patronising regard for the Irish, evidently with a view of getting up a row betwixt them; but I was highly delighted to see them, for the nonce, agree in terms of friendly nationhood, notwithstanding all the angry political incentives that were used to set them by the ears.

In consequence of the insufferable heat of the weather, which told with double effect in the glens and gulches where the miners were employed, they made it a practice of turning out at the earliest dawn, working till ten o'clock, then lying by till two o'clock, and working again in the evening till eight o'clock. They were a mixed class, made up of various nations, representing every vice that morality, religion, or law hold in abhorrence, reminding me strongly in their turbulent demeanour of a parcel of convicts during the absence of the overseer. No doubt some good citizens were scattered amongst them, but they were like isolated grain-blades, smothered with noxious weeds.

Prices of provision rated much higher there than at the Weber, owing to the great difficulty of access, it being wholly unapproachable by waggons; and every article that at all admitted of adulteration, was mixed to the full with its particular alloy.

I went from thence to the Middle and North Forks, which were both crowded, especially the former, and miners' returns good. At the Middle Fork the general average at that time was two ounces, the particles a good size, with numerous handsome specimens, that fetched far above their intrinsic value; there were several of the dandy class in those diggings, but, as might be expected, they were not particularly successful; there was also a very flash company of that school, who regulated their movements by sound of trumpet, with tents, uniform, and implements to match, whom it was quite a treat to see turn out in the morning, with military order and precision, managing everything with great system and success, save and except the matter of getting gold, which appeared to be repelled by their polished tools and formal appearance; for while ragged fellows with rusty picks and clumsy shovels carried home of evenings their nice little pannikins of clear glittering gold, the Pittsburghers could scarcely boast a particle to the hand; the fact was, they would not take the trouble of removing the soft surface soil, lying over the compact stratum that retained the gold, and their time was therefore employed merely in manufacturing muddy water.

The jealous epidemic was raging here to a great extent, and broke out fiercely on a German company under the following circumstances, which every candid man, be he Yankee or Israelite, must admit were inexcusable, unjust, and disgraceful. An American company, who had been working a barren spot very unprofitably, put up a notice that their "valuable site was for sale," as they were going up to the Juba, and a lot of Germans, who had just come in, offered themselves as purchasers. The price asked was exorbitant, as the proprietors said it returned so largely, and the following day was appointed for the Germans to come and see the fruits of an hour's working, the sellers going in the course of the night and secreting gold dust in the banks, so that it would come to light as the natural deposit during the course of the experiment, and getting their worthy countrymen to puff up the cheat in the mean time. The following morning the poor Germans were so charmed with the apparent richness of the place, they gave 500 dollars and two valuable gold watches for the property; and oh! what indecent laughing there was at the "stupid dupes," and lofty commendations of the "almighty cuteness" of Jonathan when the transfer was completed. I felt for the strangers, who were neither strong enough to enforce a restoration of their property, or rebuke the unbecoming insolence they were exposed to. However, like cool, sensible fellows, they stoically put up with what they saw they could neither remedy or resent, and went to work amid jeers and taunts. It is unnecessary to say, that the proceeds of their first day's labour was not very encouraging; nevertheless, they persevered the following morning in a spirit of perfect contentment, and, before night, had their perseverance rewarded by some very promising indications. The third day the indications led to veritable realities, enabling them to turn out the best day's work done in the diggings up to that period, and to proceed with an increasing daily average, which turned the laugh against Mr. Jonathan, who, with the most unprincipled impudence, sought to reclaim by force what he disposed of by a swindle. The Germans, however, were not so easily scared as the Mexicans, though I believe they would have been forced to move off only for the timely arrival of another German emigrant company from the States. This occurrence may serve to convey an idea of the spirit that actuated the Americans throughout the mines, and congenially blends with repudiation as a typical colouring of national character.

I also saw here, as the gentlemen of the long robe say, a nice point raised, on which there was much discussion and difference of opinion. A man named Smith, who was about the first to work in the locality, was so very successful in a short time, that he had his pile made before the crowd came, and went down to the city to make arrangements about getting home, burying his gold-dust till he returned; but lo and behold, when he came back he found the uninscribed tombstone of his treasure within the stakes of a new company, who, in a few days, would have brought to light the astounding revelation, that bountiful Nature not only showers gold on California, but leathern purses too, to hold it. The party in possession at first sternly resisted the attempts of Smith to exhume his dust, but the matter was referred to a full court of arbitration, where all Smith's proofs, marks, and tokens would have weighed as air had he not the good fortune (as they conceive it) of being a *native* Yankee.

Dysentery was very active in the North and Middle Forks, but not so fatal in its results as at the American Fork or the Weber. I got another slight attack, which I attributed to having my feet and legs so much immersed in cold water; nevertheless, I took out while there 87 dollars over and above my expenses; so that my travelling, instead of being attended with expense, added to my purse as well as my stock of information.

I next turned my steps to the Mormon Island diggings, emerging altogether from the hills into a handsome rolling country, beautifully wooded, and decked with several lovely flowering shrubs, and manzanita rushes, with their handsome bunches of crimson berries, under which the quail were as thick as chickens in a poultry-yard, not caring to take wing as you came upon them, but running in amidst the thicket. I now came upon a well-beaten road, leading from the mill to Sacramento city, which presented a great growing thoroughfare of miners and waggons, carrying goods from one town to the other. There was no lack of houses of call either on the way, for every hollow tree was the nucleus of a grog-shop, while in the neighbourhood of every spring, or stream, a sort of tavern sprung up as from the soil, "like a rose-tree in full bearing," embowered in blooming flowers of printed calico, but deplorably remote from any analogy or affinity to nature in respect of their contents or charges.

I had the honour of spending the night with a boniface, who, though a native of England, hailed last from Sydney, where he would have appeared to have cultivated assiduously the acquaintance of all the penal authorities, whose names he was perfectly familiar with. He said "he was cast away on the coast, but not liking the infernal place, he left it *without leave*"—a piece of inadvertent candour that smacked strongly of a "misunderstanding with the law," in which, of course, he was the aggrieved party. There were no such things as beds, so after staking my mule, I coiled up in a blanket, but could not enjoy much rest, as there were two pair of waggoners playing cards upon the springy counter, who brought down their trumps with an energy that made the tumblers ring, snapping the sweet bonds of repose at each thump and attestation.

Next morning my road opened into the flat, spacious valley of Sacramento, spreading out into immense tracts, marked in places with lines of timber, a thick belt showing the course of the Rio de los Americanos. It was a magnificent prospect—wanting only the grateful tint of verdure to render it transcendant. But the tall grass was scorched to the earth, and the fine poppy, peculiar to the country, shrivelled into decrepitude, the crisp vegetation going into snuff beneath the tread, while the baked surface was split into dry chinks and fissures gaping for moisture; yet men of reputation can be found to extol this as an agricultural country, and paint it in alluring colours, as an unequalled field for husbandry, though the spot on which

I then stood was about the general elevation of the lower valley of the Sacramento, full twenty feet above the river at its summer level—a demonstration of the impossibility of ever calling in irrigation to compensate for the lack of natural moisture.

I rode on through the valley, now and then taking shelter under the huge oaks that are scattered over the face of the country, and arrived at Mormon Island early in the evening, before the miners knocked-off working, as they term it. They take their name from being first discovered and worked by a body of Mormons, who got out great quantities before the public came to find it out. There was not room, I may say, for another man there at the time of my visit, its convenient position and easiness of approach leading all new comers to it. The great majority of the miners had entered into a joint association for turning the river, between the island and the shore, and were then engaged in cutting the new channel, expecting to derive extraordinary profits from the undertaking, in which the contiguous tests fully justified them, causing great excitement pending its completion, which ripened into a regular share market; sanguine men purchasing the expectations of less impulsive co-operators, and original shareholders selling out to new comers, who stepped into their shoes; so that before the job was finished, very few, I afterwards learned, of the originators were in the concern—which turned out only moderately well, averaging as much as miners were ordinarily in the habit of making, but infinitely below the standard by which purchasers of shares made their calculations.

I had now visited all the principal diggings of the lower

Sacramento (as I may call them), without being able to satisfy myself in what manner or by what agency the gold came to be so wonderfully diffused through the soil; for at every place where I tried, in the proper stratum, I invariably found it, in greater or smaller quantities, at considerable elevations, and on quick slopes remote from the operation of water-courses or inundations, looking as if it were a part and parcel of the original soil. Had it been confined to ravines, gullies, and dried-up river-beds, or the bars or banks of rivers, it might be easily and feasibly accounted for, by the detritus being carried down and deposited by winter torrents—which, in the mountain regions, perform the expensive and mechanical part of mining, stamping, and breaking up the quartz, through the natural agency of rocks hurled from great heights, which either crush it to a powder, or chip off plentiful abrasions, that are more and more disintegrated as they are carried down, becoming finer in the particles the farther they are carried, from the original seam; but being diffused, as I have described it, I must leave to more patient and scientific travellers to account for its anomalous appearances, merely adding a short extract from the scientific observations of Mr. Brackenridge, touching the theory of its formation:

"Let us suppose a series of horizontal strata, one above another, but of unequal depth, incumbent on the original unstratified mass, which forms the nucleus of the globe. According to geologists, this was the natural position; now, in consequence of some great volcanic agency, the lower mass is thrown up, and becomes the nucleus of a mountain, and that which was before the lowest, now appears on the top, while the various strata, which lay flat upon it, are tilted up the sides; these being cut through, there is exposed to view the various strata and their contents, in the same manner as if a shaft had been sunk through them in their horizontal position. If there be any metallic seams to the right or left of these cuts, they will be seen like threads, and running lengthwise with the range of the mountains. The metals contained in the now vacant spaces of those ravines, have been carried away and deposited below. The masses then separated may be the work of thousands of years; but the quantity may be estimated by the number and width of the natural cuttings of the gold seams now disconnected. It is certain the gold at the bottom cannot exceed the amount carried down from these original deposits.

Without assuming that the gold on the Sierra Nevada is greater than in the same range further south, its peculiar geographical and geological character may be a reason why gold may be found in California in greater abundance than any other part of the world. It is found along the whole range, from Sonora to Chili, although in greater or less abundance; and there is no doubt that a variety of other metals will be met with, perhaps as valuable, when the passion for gold-washing will have somewhat abated. It is remarkable that gold has been found almost invariably on the western, or Pacific side, of the great range, while silver, copper, and lead, are discovered on the eastern side, at a much higher elevation. It is probable that, instead of gold, silver and copper exist on the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada, toward the Great Basin; but by what process or operation of nature, came these seams, or veins of gold, or other metals, to be thus deposited? Was it the agency of fire, or by water and alluvion? I think it probable that both may have been at work, being the two greatest solvents in nature, and at the same time the greatest crystalisers; perhaps metallic ores may be the work of alluvion, and the production of pure metallic substances that of heat. With respect to gold, I think the latter theory is more reasonable, as it is always found in a pure state, while the quartz (pure silex) in which it is contained may be alluvial, and one of the earliest deposits, from the decomposition of the original unstratified mass. But where shall we seek for the original supply of the precious metal? How is it formed, or whence has it been extracted by the agency of heat?

It is not enough to say that, like other metals, it is found diffused through all nature—for an appreciable quantity of gold has been extracted from violets. In my opinion, it exists in the original unstratified mass, in imperceptible proportions, but proportions varying in different places, other metals being more or less abundant. The greater proportion of our soils were formed, according to Sir Humphrey Davy, by decomposition of the original mass, and this accounts for the diffusion of gold or small particles, which may be taken up by plants, and enter into the composition of organised bodies. If, then, the unstratified rock is the original seat of the metal, but in particles infinitely minute, it may have been separated by a very high degree of heat, by which it would be sublimated, or volatalised, and thus carried upward by chemico-electric force, and by a process resembling distillation. In this way it would penetrate the quartz rock, or be condensed in the spaces of the laminated strata, such as talc-schist or mica slate. Such is the theory of Buckland and other modern geologists. It may be mere speculation; but one thing is certain, as may be seen at once by those who have examined the larger masses of gold brought from California, that the finer particles of gold have been run together by a second operation of heat, sufficient only to fuse them and separate them from the quartz; the first was distillation, the second smelting, or rather simple fusion. It is possible that these great operations of nature have been repeated at different intervals, and different seams of quartz and gold may be found on ascending the ravines, the lower more completely scattered (but in finer particles) through, and the higher having undergone afterwards simple fusion."

CHAPTER IV.

Leave for Sacramento City—Description of the Country—Traders' Exactions—Their Mode of dealing with Indians—Their Ethical Notions—The Quantities of Salmon in the River—Yet no Fisheries—Colonel Cranshaw's Account of the Emigrant Suffering on the Humboldt and the Desert—Sutter's Fort—Look in vain for his great Corn-fields—The Captain sells his Interest in the Land at the Embarcadero, and endeavours to found Suttersville—The Appearance of Sacramento City—Description of it—Value of Town Lots—Accommodation for Visitors—A Californian Dormitory—Active Trade of the City—Anxiety of the Traders to secure Custom—The Pandemoniums—Their motley Frequenters—National Characteristics—Miners' Recklessness—The Harbour—The Shipping—Their anomalous Value—Wages at Sacramento—No Women or Children there then—Californian Horsemanship—Indian Idleness—Sickness in the City—The Unhealthiness of its Situation—Go down the Sacramento in a Whale-boat—Suttersville—Call on Captain Sutter—Schwartz's Settlement—The old Russian Embarcadero—Meet Vessels full of Gold Hunters—Sleep on the River Bank—The Sacramento a noble River—Indian Encampments—Scenes on the River—The Slough—Evening Party there—Its melancholy Termination—Enter the Upper or Suisoon Bay—New York—Carquine's Strait—Bernicia—Its Prospects—Visit Sonoma—The Valley and the Town—General Vallejo anxious to have it made the Seat of Government—Ride over the Neighbourhood—Leave for Sacramento in a small Schooner.

I LEFT Mormon Island for Sacramento city, travelling along the Rio de les Americanos, the noble valley expanding as I proceeded, and, as I before remarked, wanting only in moisture to render it one of the most fertile in the world. The timber followed the river, and appeared in large clumps on the plain, in the places where the water last recedes from, superb trees standing singly here and there, covering a space that at a little distance appeared much greater than the radius of any single tree. Wherever one of those stood contiguous to the road, it was certain to be the axis of a grog-shop; and numerous though they were, they all appeared to be well patronised, nor did you ever hear a grumble about their exactions, though they demanded three dollars for a bottle of stout, and one dollar for four little enrolments of trash, that had no more the flavour of tobacco than they had of honey. I saw three Californian Indians come into one of those places while I was resting there, to buy a bottle of spirits, of which they are passionately fond; when the host better than half filled a bottle with alcohol, making up the residue with water, for which he charged them three dollars; and afterwards, taking the scale to weigh their dust, put in the quarter-ounce weight, which I know was above the standard, and kept that full quantity in payment, thus robbing those ignorant creatures in the three branches of that simple transaction; first, giving them half water; secondly, putting in a four-dollar weight to get three dollars; and, thirdly, having the said weight twenty-five per cent. above par; in addition to which, he charged a most unconscionable price for an abominable compound.

As soon as they went out, he turned to me, and said, "I reckon you smoked how I sarved them at B—— out." To which I nodded. "You know," he continued, "no Christian man is bound to give full value to those infernal red-skins; they are onsoffisticated vagabones, and have no more bisnis with money than a mule or a wolf; they've no religion, an' tharfore no consciences, so I deals with them accordin."—"But," I replied, not caring to get into an ethical controversy with so undiluted a reprobate, "I believe you missionaries have already begun to enlighten them, and are making preparations on a large scale to convert and bring them into the Christian fold."—"No doubt they have," he said; "but it is time enough for men in trade to encourage them when they learn the truths of the gospel."

A new batch of customers interrupted the dialogue, so I left this impressive moralist, who I am satisfied deals with all alike when he finds he can try on his cheating with impunity. A good many batches of cattle and mules now began to dot the plain; some that had crossed the land route, and just arrived, presenting a wretched contrast to those sleek-sided beasts that were bred in the country. Looking down the steep river-bank as I sauntered along, I could distinctly see great numbers of enormous salmon and trout in the clear water below, which, as I have already remarked, abound in the Sacramento, San Joaquim, and all their tributaries, in all of which there are countless favourable places for erecting weirs, where any amount of fish might be taken, which always commands an exorbitant price in the Sacramento and Francisco markets; but no one seems to give the matter any attention, though most other projects, which present a profitable aspect, are jumped into with avidity. I talked over the subject with some gentlemen of intelligence and capital in both cities, but I could not induce them to entertain it, though they would unhesitatingly give eight or ten dollars for a good fish, their general objection being the great rises of the river, though, as I told them, weirs might be constructed that could be removed on the approach of floods.

About four o'clock I saw a flag waving on the end of a tall pole, a few miles ahead, in the line of the river, where the valley opened out in a south-easterly direction further than the eye could follow its bounds. This I was told was Sutter's Fort, the place where Captain Sutter first established himself when he reached that country. As I was riding slowly on, I was overtaken by a pack-mule train, just coming in from the States, under the guidance of Colonel Cranshaw. Both men and animals appeared terribly cut up, complaining of many accidents and great hardships, and the loss of several animals by exhaustion and Indian treachery. They drew a frightful picture of the sufferings of the emigrants on Humboldt River and the desert, Colonel Cranshaw giving it as his opinion that they would all perish unless early succour were sent to them. I recommended him to represent it to the authorities as soon as he got to the city, which he did; and I believe it was the means of bringing about the organisation for their rescue which was subsequently so effectively got up. He also informed me of the spread of cholera in the States, and mentioned several fatal cases as having occurred amongst the emigrants along the Platte.

We pulled up at Sutter's Fort, which is about two miles from the embarcadero on the Rio de los Americanos. It is an oblong pile, erected on a rising ground, with a few of the characteristics of a fortress about it, built of adobes, the external wall being from eighteen to twenty feet in height, shedded down all round inside, with an adobe house two story high in the centre. This was originally the captain's residence, and all the sheds, his stores, stables, &c. But now the house is an hotel, and the sheds are fitted up into hospitals, billiard-rooms, and taps. There are two large gates, at each of which there were a pair of Indians couchant; but the whole is in a state of decline, fast crumbling into original dust, in which it would not surprise me if there was a small per centage of the golden quality. I looked about the fort for Captain Sutter's immense fields of wheat and corn, which should then be ready for the sickle, but not a head of either was to be seen, the captain having declined agricultural pursuits about the time they would have recompensed him best, if the pursuit was a thriving one; but I suppose the captain made the experiment, and, finding the climate unsuitable for the maturation of grain, discontinued it, for he is not the man to abandon a project if he thinks it can be made to answer expectations by perseverance and industry. He no longer resides at the fort, his head-quarters being at Suttersville, on the banks of the Sacramento, about three miles below the city, where he is endeavouring to found a new town, having sold his interest in the site of Sacramento before it grew into its present importance—a piece of over-anxiety which threw a countless fortune into the hands of the purchasers, and which he will not be able to repair in his new project, for it does not appear to take in the slightest.

Sacramento city, as the embarcadero is called, was clearly visible from the fort, reposing on the plain in its white summer costume; the plains on both sides down stocked with cattle, mules, and horses, from which the ocean emigrants purchased their supplies, there being no animal market in San Francisco. For a mile out from the city. There was a suburb of snow-white tents of different shapes and sizes, erected amongst the fine open trees that skirted it, presenting a most pretty and unique appearance; and on entering the town I found nine-tenths of the houses made of the same material, nailed on very light frames indeed; the streets laid out with great regularity, and of a fine width, many of the majestic trees being permitted to remain, casting their delicious shade about, and adding wonderfully to the novel and pleasing effect. The shops and stores are very spacious, and excellently assorted, quantities of even light portable goods being piled out under the verandahs, where they remain night and day—strange as it may appear in this mixed community, with perfect security, such was the apprehension of summary punishment that followed detected theft.

Town lots were fetching wonderful prices at that period; sites with frontages twenty-five feet by twenty-five feet bringing from 3000 dollars to 5000 dollars, with a steady upward tendency. There were no hotels; but in lieu of them there were boarding-houses, where your bare meals cost you twenty-five dollars per week, attached to each of which there was a large apartment, littered over with hay, where you paid one dollar for the privilege of lying on the ground in your own blanket. If you remained over one night you rolled your blanket up on the spot you lay and left it there; but as all did not come to bed at the same time, or in the same trim, you were subject to have your snoring interrupted by the iron-heel of a huge boot on your nose, or the knee of a staggering emigrant in search of his nest on the pit of your stomach; nor was it unusual in the morning to find a congealed tobacco spittle on your cheek, or like a big soot-drop on your blanket. There was one gent that retired generally about the same hour I did, who told me as, "a curiosity," that on last night we had the honour of having as bedfellows two real judges, five ex-governors, three lawyers, as many doctors, streaked with blacksmiths, tinkers, and tailors, "that made a most almighty beautiful democratic amalgam, that's a fact." Our board was as good as it could be without fish, milk, butter, or vegetables; but the drink was dire stuff.

There was an active business doing throughout in every shop with emigrants fitting out for the mines; and so anxious were shopkeepers to secure a trade at their large scale of profits, they never exhibited any hesitation about giving credit to large amounts to parties they were wholly unacquainted with, without any introduction whatever. I saw several instances of this, and heard emigrants expressing their astonishment at the wonderful liberality of the traders, who, however, took care in all the cases to palm off a second-rate article, or one that had suffered damage in its long transit, knowing that customers accommodated with long credits could not be over scrutinous in their examinations; while their knowledge of the richness of the mines afforded them a guarantee that their customers would have the means of easy repayment within their reach.

But the establishments that commanded the largest and steadiest trade, and where the circulating medium beat with the strongest pulsation, were the pandemoniums, which were crowded morning, noon, and night, and certainly with the most mixed and motley congregations I ever before witnessed—whites, half-castes, copper, mahogany, and blacks—delegates from every nation that takes any part or interest in the commerce or intercourse of the world, their features more varied than their colours, and their costumes representing the fashions of their several countries. The jargon of voices, mutters, and exclamations of those votaries of fortune, made a most strange medley of sounds, and you could pretty well discover the various national characteristics of the players in the progress of the game; the cool indifference of the Russian or the Turk, the latter placidly stroking his beard under the frowns of the fickle goddess; while the Frenchman at his elbow was sibilating his sacrès, and the Yankee opposite cursing and thumping the table with boisterous vehemence; Paddy down at the end consoling himself with the philosophic reflection, "that the worse luck now the better again"—"Come my hearties, send round the ball—a faint heart never won a fair lady—hurroo;" the cloaked Spaniard and the phlegmatic German laying down their stakes mechanically from the outside; the Scotch chiel poking in his head from the same region, just to see how the chances ran "afore he risked his siller;" while Italians smoked and hummed, and Chinese looked as innocent as if tricks were no part of their training. All the new-comers staked coin, the miners dust, some of them putting down large purses at a single venture, exclaiming, "Now for it—home or the diggins?" "The diggins by Heaven!" as the president raked the bag into the infernal coffers; and up got the miner to go dig another fortune, and again to have it charmed from his grasp.

There was a large fleet of fine shipping in the river lying afloat, close enough to the banks to discharge by gangway, the river being very deep, and tidal for fifty miles above the city. Several splendid ships were dismantled and converted into stores, boarding-houses, and hospitals, their crews having all deserted, and there being no possibility of getting them down to the coast. I saw A1 ships there, 400 tons burden, offered for 8000 dollars without getting a customer; and fifteen ton boats, suited to river trade, selling readily as high as 2500 dollars. Wages of all sorts were very high at that time, a common labourer getting twelve dollars and his keep, and any sort of tradesman from one ounce to twenty dollars. The cost of tightening the tyres of a waggon was thirty-two dollars, and that of shoeing a horse twelve dollars; however, as the emigration came in, those unparalleled charges were gradually fined down, but never to what I would call a reasonable level.

There was one peculiarity about the city, then containing about 10,000 souls, that could not fail striking a stranger immediately, which was the total absence of women and children. Native Californians were constantly coming to and fro, galloping, as is always their custom, at full speed, even through the most crowded thoroughfares; but they manage their horses with admirable skill, and can rein them up in an instant, from the tremendous severity of their bits. Numbers, too, of the native Indians were constantly strolling about, too idle to hire themselves out, even at the high rates offered, engaged in groups, gambling, not with cards, but a kind of thimble-rig, in which one man takes a small ball, and after shuffling his hands, so as to puzzle the sight, then holds them out for the parties to guess in which the ball is, each taking their turns at hiding it. I was greatly amused standing over them as they were squatted under a large tree at the end of one of the main streets, swaying their bodies about and grunting during the progress of the game.

Sickness prevailed in the city in the shape of dysentery and diarrhœa, and great apprehensions were entertained that the incoming emigrants would carry the cholera with them. I fear the city, from its position, will never be a peculiarly healthy one, for it stands in a hollow, several feet below the level of the river-bank, which renders it an absolute impossibility to drain it properly, while the ground at the back, towards the fort, and again on the south, towards Suttersville, rises so considerably, that unless the authorities can establish a Mediterranean sink to swallow the impurities, they must let them dry up and fester in their several pools that stand under the houses, which are raised on piles.

After inspecting this new gossamer city, I started with a few new acquaintances in a whale-boat down the Sacramento, leaving at the turn of the tide, and dropping down to Suttersville, where there were a few ships lying; and although several streets were staked out, very few houses were erected, and no appearance of any trade or bustle, except that resulting from a small garrison of U. S. troops stationed there, greatly thinned, as I heard, by desertion, while at the back of the town stood the residence of Captain Sutter, on whom I called, but he was at his rancho on Feather River; a circumstance I much regretted, as I expected to have derived a good deal of information from him concerning the country, and obtain his candid opinion as to its agricultural capabilities.

Four miles further down, on the opposite side of the river, there is a German settler named Schwartz, who has cleared a lot of land, on which he raises water and musk melons and pumpkins, and now derives a very good income from their sale. He has a squad of half-civilised Indians about him, whom he keeps mostly employed in draughting for salmon, which they catch in great quantities and of immense size, some of them, that I saw split and suspended to dry in a shed behind his house, weighing as much as thirty pounds, only used for the diet of his Indian servitors, who relish them exceedingly. I told him it would pay him better than his vegetable gardening to send the fish fresh to the Sacramento market; an experiment he said he would try. He is a long time in the country, and said to be enormously rich, but lives in a rude and comfortless state, without any idea of hospitality. Below him, again, a few miles on the opposite bank, is what is called the Russian embarcadero, a sloping indentation on the shore, where the Russians at one time formed a small settlement, but at present there is no vestige of the place, nor does the adjoining country furnish any evidence that they were improving settlers, for beyond a small clearance for the supply of firewood, I could not see any trace of industry.

We pulled eight or nine miles further down, against a strong flood tide, passing two schooners and several smaller craft on their way up, choke full of passengers; and, as the shades of evening set in, made fast our boat to a tree stem, cooking our supper, and fixing our couches on the bank; often hearing throughout the night the jocund song of embryo gold-diggers, gladly gliding over the waters to the golden goal. Next morning we got under weigh early, stealing down by the lofty banks under the shade of the impending trees, getting an occasional slant of favourable wind at some of the bends of this truly noble river, which is almost of a uniform depth, without snag or sawyer, or any other obstruction to interfere with or endanger navigation—a peculiarity the more striking, from the great height and impetuosity of its winter floods, and the proximity of timber to the banks. There are scarcely any water-fowl on its lower waters, and rarely, if ever, an open space in the impenetrable forest that skirts its shores. I landed in several places where I thought I discovered breaks; but they were of no extent, caused by lagoons too swampy for the growth of timber. We passed two small Indian encampments during the day, but they had nothing to trade, and appeared to be living in a state of great squalor, many of them covered with blotches and loathsome ulcers, the fruits of a certain disease, which, I learn, is fast diminishing their already limited numbers.

However, if silence and solitude reigned along the shores, the songs of the sailors and boatmen, and the chants of cheery emigrants enlivened the waters as they swept along, in quick succession, towards the seat of their fortunes, and many a time were we hailed for information by those sanguine voyageurs, to know how matters went on in the mines, as they conceived it "passing strange," to see men turning their backs upon Plutus as we were. We came on the second night to the mouth of the Slough, a narrow gut that runs in a straight course for eight miles, joining the river again at the end of that distance, the river taking a sweep of forty miles to arrive at the same point. It is deep enough for any vessel, and all come through it to effect the saving. According to the computation of an American settler there, we were ninety miles from Sacramento. In the course of the evening we were joined by four other boats on their way up, and made "right merrie" on the strength of our pleasing intelligence; for, though I did not disguise the drawbacks, such as sickness and privations, they never overcast the bright anticipations which the certain abundance of gold engendered. There were myriads of musquitoes filling the air in the neighbourhood, the first I saw in the waters of the Sacramento, and of a very poisonous genus, inflammation setting in immediately after the sting. They resisted all our efforts to banish them, and continued dreadfully annoying, coming in clouds from the tule marshes that lay between the Slough and the river. Like our party coming up the Platte, the Americans betook themselves to the water, performing all sorts of capers, and, in their exuberant glee, indulging in every manner of joke, one fellow, after a heavy plunge, shouting out, "Bottom, bottom;" another hallooing in reply, "Take care you don't knock it out, and let through all the gold," and such like badinage; but in the height of the merriment a sharp cry of distress arose, and before assistance could be rendered, a young man, named Flintner, had passed from the hopes and anxieties of this world to an endless eternity.

After passing the Slough next morning, the river commenced expanding, forming bars in places, the timber getting thinner, and the banks lower and more flat, until we passed the delta, through which the waters of the

Sacramento and the San Joaquim disembogue into Suisoon Bay. On getting into the bay we encountered a heavy sea, driven up by a north-westerly breeze, that was quite enough for an open boat to contend with, and continued to freshen so much that we were forced to bear off for a small harbour on its eastern shore, where a new city has been started, under the proud name of New York; but it is a perfect mystery to me on what its founders build their expectations of future eminence, for it stands on a swamp, with a shoal channel to approach it, and a bald, barren country behind it. As the afternoon advanced the breeze lulled, and we entered Carquine's Strait under a resplendent sky, gemmed over with celestial jewels, that shed a glittering light on the high bold cliffs of its southern shore, the infant city of Benicia, on the hanging slope opposite, with its ships in front, and military cantonments spread out on the hill behind, presenting a novel but beautiful spectacle.

Benicia stands on the northern shore of the strait which connects the Suisoon and the San Pablo Bays; the strait is a mile wide, and several fathoms deep. The shore along the town is bold and deep, admitting vessels of the largest burden to come close alongside. The head-quarters of the American troops in California are fixed here, which, I imagine, led to the idea of starting the city, in expectation that extensive government works would follow. As yet, however, there is no symptom of any move of that sort, and town lots, which were for a while at a high premium, now drag out a precarious existence at par. There are a good few houses and stores, but no stir of trade about it. Like New York, the country behind it is of mediocre character, the hills approaching it closely, and having no connexion with any of the mines. I therefore cannot predict any great things for this new place, which has, however, many natural advantages.

When leaving Sacramento I intended going on to Francisco, then moving south, and wintering in the district of the Valley of San José; but I here accidentally met with two of my companions across the continent, with two other friends of theirs, on their way up to Sacramento, to start for Trinity River, of which they recounted me marvellous tales, derived from indubitable authority, pressing me to join them, which I finally consented to, having, as I calculated, nearly three months to visit the northern diggings before the rainy season would set in; so I arranged to meet them at Sacramento in three days, giving them authority to include my requisites in their outfit, as I determined to take this opportunity of visiting Sonoma, which was represented in the most glowing colours as a valley of great beauty and extraordinary fertility, where grain had been raised, and could be grown to meet the requirements of the entire country, being anxious to see a place so particularly specified as possessing agricultural qualifications, which I doubted existed for any extent in any part of the whole valley of the Sacramento. The valley and the town, which was one of the sites of the old Missions, are situated on the northern shores of the bay, about eighteen miles inland, on a creek of its own name, which is navigable for twelve or fourteen miles for vessels of light draft in seasons of high water, but at this season (10th September) the embarcadero cannot be approached, even by a canoe, except at the top of high water. The shores of the bay, for some miles inland, are marshy and fit for nothing unless it be the cultivation of rice; however, as I proceeded the land improved wonderfully in quality, but the fine grass was brown and crisped for want of moisture; several herds of tame cattle and horses were scattered over it, in magnificent condition, and some good log-houses of new settlers. The valley is bounded at the back by low rounded hills, with scarcely any timber, but green all over with wild oats, on which the cattle feed when other herbage is scant, and from those hills there issue several streams, that might be made subservient to the purposes of irrigation in the earlier season, but very few of them now contained any water.

The town, like all the old Missions, is built round a plaza, but there is now scarce a vestige of the old establishments; in their stead, good modern houses and stores have been erected, as it is a favourite place for settlement by those not carried away by the mania of gold-digging, and will rise into importance, if the proprietor, General Don Mariano Gaudalope Vallejo, succeeds (as it is thought he will) in having the seat of government transferred there, when it would become the residence of the governor, and the place where the senate and assembly would congregate. The general, who is an enormously rich man, would be greatly benefited by such an arrangement, for almost all the property around belongs to him. The position and natural beauty of the place will tell in its favour, over and above which I understand the general has offered to advance a sum sufficient to cover the erection of all the offices and public buildings required by the government. I waited on the general, who is a native of the country, and was received with the greatest courtesy and hospitality. He is a fine, handsome man, in the prime of life, of superior attainments and great natural talent, the only native Californian in the senate. His lady is also possessed of unusual personal attractions, and of that easy dignity and warmth of manner so peculiarly characteristic of Spanish ladies. His house is a fine one, superbly furnished, and wanting in nothing that comfort or luxury requires.

I hired a horse, and rode over the whole of the adjacent country known as the Valley of Sonoma, but could only meet a few places, of inconsiderable extent, where crops could be raised, as only in those localities could irrigation be kept up to the proper period of maturation. I finished my survey time enough to get down to a nice schooner lying at the mouth of the creek, in which I engaged my passage to Sacramento, but, being late, was obliged to put up with deck accommodation, all the berths below being occupied; a disappointment I did not much regret in such a climate, on one of its finest nights, after such an apprenticeship as I served to unsheltered sleeping in crossing the plains.

CHAPTER V.

Set sail and get Aground—How we bumped, thumped, and staggered—Scene in the Cabin—Sleeping in the Foresail—Providential Deliverance—Joking next Morning—Dead Calm and hot Sun—Cast Anchor—Amusements on Board—The Californian Prayer-book—Short Commons—Wild Cattle—Shoot a Steer—Their fine Shapes—How they originated and increased—Substitute for the Buffalo—Get the Beef on Board—Sharp Exercise and cold Evening Air superinduce Illness—Symptoms—Californian Ague—The Sufferings it Entails—How I dealt with it, and Conquered it—Causes of its Virulence in the Mines—Wonderful Progress of Sacramento—Attempt to Defeat the Charter by the Gamblers—Their Motives—First Hotel in Sacramento—Its Style of Architecture—Internal Construction—The Opening Banquet—Cost and Rent of the Concern.

WE weighed anchor by moonlight with a fine breeze; but just as we hove in stays on our first tack, we had reached on to a bank, getting fast aground, and, as the tide rose, kept thumping and drifting for some hours. Although the sea did not run very high, our situation was attended with danger, as our bark was one of those frail craft got up hurriedly to meet the demand for river navigation, and was neither timbered, fastened, or found substantially, without even a kedge on board to bouse her off. However, as the wind sets steadily from the same point from February till October, we knew she would forge in the same direction all night, and probably stagger into deep water ere morning's tide. The air was very sharp, but sleep or comfort was not to be obtained, for she would be awhile on her larboard beam-end, bumping and thumping, then suddenly rising on even keel in deeper water, as suddenly fall down on her starboard beam, huddling passengers, furniture, and all odds and ends in the cabin into a kaleidoscopic heap, inflicting several serious wounds, cuts, and bruises. The deck was altogether unsafe, for the bulwarks were so low they afforded no protection from a sharp list; but as her sails were lowered and not furled, I bethought me that probably the bag of the foresail might afford a tolerable hammock. So crawling forward during an interregnum, I made fast the boom of it securely, and, dropping myself down, was soon swayed into a profound sleep, which was broken in upon in the middle of the night by the noise of the crew and the shouting of the captain to hoist the sails. I could not instantly bring to mind my situation, and made no effort to arise till I found the canvas slipping sensibly in folds from under me, and the boom swinging violently, when I became conscious of my situation and danger, roaring with might and main without making myself heard. I then endeavoured to get upright, but every lift of the sail upset me, and as it was fast getting chock up, I felt the peril of my position: grasping at the reef-points, two of which I got hold of, and being in the second row, they just enabled me to reach my toes to the boom; however, as I was to leeward, the bagging of the sail to a stiff breeze made my hold very insecure and fearfully dangerous, being wholly unperceived in the dark, and the vessel going free, full eight knots. I tried again to attract attention, but my efforts were drowned by the rushing of the waters and the whistling of the wind through the cordage; my hold and footing now got more difficult and uncertain, rendering me dreadfully nervous and exhausted. Just as I was about abandoning all hopes, the man at the helm, suffering her to take a yaw to leeward, the sail jibed, and, as it passed over the deck, I dropped down almost in a state of insensibility. It was a miraculous and providential deliverance, and led to the registration of a vow on the subject of hammocks, which I would recommend all travellers to imitate. It seems our bark got afloat in deep water earlier than we expected, and there being no more shoals or banks in our course, and tolerable starlight, the captain ordered the men to make sail, my lucky star being in the ascendant, else there would have been an abrupt conclusion to my Californian rambles and adventures.

As the morning sun arose, warm and unclouded, my vapours, excitement, and displeasure evaporated, leaving me, however, as the sailors term it, "an appetite like a handsaw," and making me merge every cranky feeling into a keen desire for breakfast, which was prolonged, to the annoyance of the second-table candidates, by the recital of the hammock adventure, as the crowded state of the vessel and her limited accommodation rendered such an arrangement inevitable. There were divers and sundry mishaps of a more unpretending character, evidenced by patches and discolourations of different tints and shades; but the only querulous sufferer was an old alchemist, on his way to the mines, to cheat Nature of the great secret, who lost one pane out of his spectacles, and was apprehensive the glaziers in Sacramento were unprovided with any but what the trade term a C.C. article. Various were the sly jokes and ~~bad~~ puns manufactured on the occasion, till a rough countryman of my own suggested a piece of "Patt's hat," which fairly roused Caderallader from a simmer to a boil over.

As the day advanced the wind declined, the sun's heat increasing in intensity till noon, when it lulled into a dead calm, which, together with an ebb tide, obliged us to cast anchor nearly abreast of the mouths of the Sacramento and San Joaquim Rivers. Every one now adopted his favourite method of killing time, which was rather a difficult labour with the limited armoury on board, as library there was none, neither were there fish-lines, nor nets, nor yet musical instruments, nor even a shady retreat from the solar blaze; for dread notes of preparation were audibly issuing from the little cabin, where the torpid musquitoes, who were paralysed by the chills of San Francisco, began buckling on their armour, reinforced by fresh drafts from the neighbouring delta. Cigars were employed by some, others were engaged at rifle-practice at empty bottles thrown into the water, but by far the greater number were engaged in the study of the "Californian prayer-book"—as a pack of cards are profanely designated—a weapon which a native or an acclimatised settler rarely ever stirs abroad without, such is their all-absorbing passion for the game; and most careful, too, are they of their missal, which they carry in a nicely fitting case, something like those sandwich-boxes which hard-worked lawyers in the Westminster courts carry about to swell their bags.

As I was surveying the various groups of Monte professors, Poker pushers, and Uker players, I overheard the steward telling the captain, "that not calculating on such a crowd of passengers, he feared all his fresh provision would run out." While they were discussing how the difficulty was to be met, I called the captain's attention to a moving mass, as it appeared to me, on the side of one of the remote hills, which proved, on a survey through the glass, to be a large herd of cattle that I imagined belonged to a neighbouring rancho, and therefore would not have minded them further, only that the captain ordered a boat to be lowered, and commenced canvassing for recruits to go in pursuit of "the wild steers yonder;" but, with the exception of myself and another, there were no volunteers to reinforce the regular crew of the vessel; so we pushed off, seven in number, dividing ourselves, when we reached the shore, into three parties, a centre and two wings, creeping as covertly as the naked pasture would permit, until the mate and his companion, who came first within range, fired, when the herd broke in our direction, and by the time they approached close enough for our guns to play, we could discern one badly crippled, unable to keep up with the rest, stopping frequently, looking back wildly, and lowing lowly in a piteous tone, during one of which pauses my comrade shot him again, and fatally, for life was quite extinct ere we came up—a distance of not more than one hundred and fifty yards.

He was in prime order, and from his marks and nice points, would not disgrace the paddocks of the best Leicestershire feeder. While cutting him up, I inquired if those herds were numerous, or if there was no ownership claimed by any parties. But it seems unless a beast in that country is duly branded, he is public property, and that the number of those independent herds in the valleys of the Sacramento and San Joaquim are immense, originating in animals that wander out of company on those vast plains, which, after once breeding in the wilderness, are never disposed again to rejoin the more domesticated droves. Settlers, too, who, ere the discovery of the gold mines, were attracted to Oregon as a country more suited for agricultural purposes, made convenient selections from their large herds, driving them over the mountains, and leaving the culls to "increase and multiply," in a state of perfect nature; from which parent stock the country is supplied with a substitute for the buffalo, which, as I have before observed, is not found westward of the Rocky Mountains; and most opportunely do they often minister to an empty stomach, or a system rife with scurvy, from the constant use of salt provisions unaccompanied with vegetables.

By the time we got on board with all the prime pieces, a fresh breeze began to spring up with the flood tide, but as evening came on, the air became uncomfortably chill, which was more sensibly felt by me, from the state of the blood, after the sharp exercise of the day, having had a long distance each, to pack a heavy load of beef. The cabin being crammed to suffocation, and dark with tobacco smoke, I rolled myself up in my blanket on the deck, at a respectful distance from the foresail; but the extreme cold banishing the luxury of sleep, I shifted my position close to the cook's quarters; however, the caloric in that region was insufficient to modify my shivers. I tried the virtues of brandy-and-water, but they were of no avail, and by the time every resource was exhausted, and day breaking, I felt sickish and out of sorts—the breakfast preparations hissed unheeded round my ears, and were wafted without effect under my nostrils—my aching joints causing me to apprehend a fever, as head-ache began stealthily to take its place, with which the stomach soon avowed a kindred sympathy, until a complete over-all-ishness forced me to resume my blanket. The dinner, with its wild beef attractions, had none for me; and as the day again declined into shade and cold, I felt thrills along my spine, followed by an uncontrollable shivering quite foreign to me, but recognised by the initiated as the premonitory symptoms of ague—which, sure enough, as another night came round, had gathered sufficient strength to shake me without mercy.

Nor were the cold fits the worst; the dry roasting fever that succeeded had incomparably more horrors for me; and for four days that we continued to creep up this fine river, on which the high banks and lofty timber permitted only the topsails to draw with effect, did my ailment increase in virulence, my strength becoming so thoroughly prostrated, that I had to be carried on shore in a hammock, to where my friend's tent was erected on the outskirts of the city. I tried a whole catalogue of ague recipes, but my daily visitant, which came as punctually as if its movements were regulated by a chronometer, set them all at defiance, until I was unable to sit erect to take a drink, my shoulders, hips, knees, and ankles getting stripped and ulcerated from the terrible shaking and the hardness of my couch. My case was now considered hopeless, and, believing my recovery impossible, I made an effort, but an ineffectual one, to scrawl a line to my absent friends, which was performed by a friend, whose kindness and tender attention shall never be forgotten by me.

In addition to my bodily weakness, I also conceived that my mind was forsaking me, which caused an agony of fear and contrition at the thought of going before my Eternal Judge without any religious consolation. While in this state, I overpersuaded my friend, as a last resource, to procure me some quinine, sufficient for three doses of double the ordinary quantity, the first of which he reluctantly administered in a little brandy, and, to his great dismay, saw it followed by the most aggravated and prolonged shake I ever had; but as it subsided, instead of its usual concomitant, a burning fever, I found a genial glow begin to creep over me, accompanied by a gentle perspiration, and a soothed state of mind and body, that caused the first visitation of refreshing sleep I had for several days. I awoke, mightily refreshed, and, feeling that my enemy was staggered, insisted on another dose to follow up the blow, and again a delicious slumber, unbroken by dreams, shed its sanative influence upon me, when waking consciousness returned, I felt stout enough to demand imperatively the remaining dose, and as I swallowed it, I felt as assured of my victory as if I had my knee on the chest of a footpad, with a pistol at his brain.[*]

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[*] I subsequently got a recipe from a gentleman whom I met, the efficacy of which I once tested in a renewed attack, and in numerous other cases where I administered it, which I subjoin for the benefit of future travellers:—

Twenty-five grains of blue pill, twenty-five grains of quinine, and twelve grains of oil of black pepper, made into twelve pills; one to be taken every hour, for six hours, on the morning of the shake; one, every hour, for four hours, the morning following; the remaining two, at the same interval, on the third morning.

The Californian ague is said to be the very worst type of that fearful malady; and its victims being, for the most part, unprovided with the means and appliances to mitigate its attacks, suffer proportionately, living in cold tents, sleeping on the damp earth, working very generally knee-deep in water, rarely provided with changes of clothing, and using unwholesome diet, they become an easy prey to its ravages.

When able to toddle about town, I was amazed at the extent of improvement in the limited period of my absence—to be sure, its edifices were of simple construction, and capable of being erected with great facility; nevertheless, when I surveyed one fine new street of goodly proportions, with well-stored shops and a busy population, which had sprung into being and bustle in so brief a space, I could not repress my wonder and amazement; others also ambitiously planned were fast approximating to occupation, the most imposing piece of architecture in each being, as a matter of course, a capacious hell, or gaudy gambling rendezvous, one of which was emblazoned in letters of immense magnitude, with the quaintly characteristic name of the "The City Diggings."

There was an unusual ballot just then proceeding, to take the sense of the community as to the propriety of having a charter for the city, which was near being defeated, owing to wondrous activity and profuse expenditure in treating and bribing of the gambling community, who feared, that if the city became endowed with a regular corporation, energetic steps would be taken to put down their nuisances. Two ounces of gold was the ordinary rate of a vote, and all those nefarious receptacles were turned into open cellars for the occasion, where every reckless opponent to law, order, or good society, could walk in and help himself as he listed. However, after a close contest, the vampires and their myrmidons were defeated; and the city is now governed by municipal laws and regulations, emanating from a corporation who are interested in the real and permanent prosperity of the place, which I trust has, ere this, abolished or abated those crying abominations.

I was awakened the morning after the election by the booming of cannon at regular intervals; and supposing it to be either in celebration of the auspicious termination of that event, or announcing the arrival of a frigate that was expected, I took a stroll towards the shipping, from whence the reports came, my strength being sufficiently restored to enable me to exercise moderately; but I discovered those *feu-de-joie* were in honour of the opening of the first attempt at a regular hotel, which was just noticeable above the surface when I went down the Sacramento. It is called the "City Hotel," and is a fine lumber or wooden building of considerable dimensions, intended to be *the* great architectural feature of the city, with decorations of as pretending a character as green wood would admit; but as to their affinity to any of the celebrated orders of antiquity, or the incongruous medleys of modern date, I believe it would be just as difficult a task to decide upon the exact relationship of Dermot Mac Fig's Dulcinea, which she pleaded in extenuation of

> Being caught dancing a jig
> With a mealman so tall and so big,

as to say whether the Corinthian, the Gothic, the Ionic, or which other of the nics or niches could lay best claim to the flattering connexion. In a word, It it is a showy edifice, with a good deal of cutting, carving, and scratching, clothed in a gaudy suit of flaring paints, and a large projecting verandah and balcony to relieve the "broad Atlantic of its countenance."

The interior is laid out more with a view to profit than comfort, the saloons for the *table d'hôte* and wet smokers being more than ordinarily capacious, while the dormitories were on the other extreme; those with single beds being cramped, pinched-up little cells, wide enough in one proportion for a split mattress, and in the other for a slim wash-hand-stand, a narrow chair, the occupant, and his valise. There were some half-dozen state sleeping-rooms of more extensive dimensions, with one or two more articles of attenuated furniture, and space enough for the attendant when summoned to come in bodily, on which a corresponding high tariff was exacted; and one large omnibus apartment, with sleeping traps, or bunks, as they are called, four deep all around, festooned with printed or daubed calico, calculated to accommodate, or more properly speaking, hold an entire regiment; in the centre of which stood an undressed dressing-table, surmounted with an exaggerated basin, and looking-glass to match; while from its horns hung in chains an elephantine rack and brush on either side, the tooth-brush being exempt from restraint, either because it was comparatively valueless, or because the eccentric motions of dental purification required it to be free. The order of each day is "one *done* another come on," in conformity with which a rank of candidates, with tucked-up sleeves and tucked-down collars, stand in exact file for their turns. The man next the person in process very generally taking a rasp at the tooth-brush, either to while away the time, or have so much of his job over. The main apartment is one having a spacious bar at one end, with an elongated counter, on which were ranged the different potatory implements and instruments, arranged in their most attractive positions; behind which were rows of nicely-decorated kegs, with their polished brass cocks and distinctive designations, the space over them being garnished with bottles of every variety of size, shape, and hue, labelled most picturesquely. At the other end stood a billiard-table, and sundry other tables, where folks might either sip their beverage or open their prayer-books, or both; each of which were rented out to Monte dealers, roulette players, or chuck-a-luck men; chairs, rocking and rickety, being distributed at convenient intervals, and the "walls hung around" with prints of the lions indigenous to the States.

It was not exactly the most propitious day for inspecting the premises, as the crowd that thronged it was immense, the hospitable lessees having spread a gratuitous board for all comers, where the fare was most plentiful and excellent, attendance most prompt, every call being attended to with as much alacrity and apparent cheerfulness as if the screw was at work, Champagne being produced as quickly as water, and pastry—which bears a most exorbitant price—being as plentiful as hard bread; while demolished hams, joints of beef, mutton, and venison, were magically replaced by most becoming successors, permitting me to take for granted that the culinary department was most conveniently and efficiently contrived. The feast was prolonged for several hours, and the drinking, until its effects, were irresistible. Putting the current price upon the different meats, drinks, esculents, condiments, &c., which were put to the sacrifice on that day, I could fearlessly assert that five thousand dollars would not cover the expense. The building and furniture of the concern cost fifty thousand dollars, and it is rented at a yearly impost of ten thousand dollars—rather a respectable rent for such a concern, in a city not of twelve months' standing.

CHAPTER VI.

Prepare for the Northern Trip—Admiral Stockton's magnanimous Conduct—Select an Ox-Team—Price of Hay—Lose some of our Animals—Obliged to travel our First Stage by Night—Road Marks—Our Nap on the Trail—Disappointed Hopes—Distress of the Oxen—Reach the River—Resume our Journey—Find good Quarters, and kill a Deer—Fair's Ranch—Those Establishments in Days of Yore—The Contrast now—Mr. Fair's Tariff on the Productions of his Ranch—The Juba Indians—We Trade with them—Their Mode of Fishing—The River and the Crossing—Visit a Mining Encampment—Our Trail to Feather River—Our Camp and our Neighbours—Their treacherous Conduct—Attempt at Explanation—Declaration of Hostility—Disposition of our Forces—Night Attack—Appearances in the Morning—Order of Crossing—The Action—The Retreat of the Indians to their Village—Its Appearance—Get over in Safety—Precautionary Arrangements—Scenery along the River—More Night Travel—Its Object—Bad Roads—Emigrant Encampment—Their wretched State and sad News—Unparalleled Sufferings of the later Emigrants—Caught in the Snow—Their fearful Privations and Struggles—Fatal Results—Disease and Insanity on the Humboldt—Ague on the Sacramento—Bitter Regret of these Emigrants for leaving a comfortable Home.

My health and strength now rapidly improving, we began turning our attention to the trip northward, but discovered that we should proceed by the slow medium of oxen, as the magnanimous resolve of Admiral Stockton to appropriate 150,000 dollars to aid the suffering emigrants in reaching their destination, suddenly enhanced the price of mules, and swept the market of every serviceable animal. We therefore selected three yoke of choice steers, and having laid in all our stores, mining implements, and a riding-nag each, which I was enabled to supply from my stock in a neighbouring ranch, we moved about six miles out, crossing the Rio de los Americanos, to avoid the dust, din, and heat of the city, and secure cheap food for our animals, as hay was then ten dollars per hundredweight in town. After two days spent in revising our schedule and completing our preparations, we set about hunting up our cattle and horses, that were permitted to roam at large over the plain, but after a most toilsome day's search, two yoke of our oxen were missing. Early on the following day we went out mounted, traversing the interminable plains, and diligently looking amongst the crowds of oxen with which they were dotted, only finding another yoke; but rather than lose any more time, we purchased another pair of steers, resolved on starting the same evening.

We were constrained to travel during the night, having to cross a space of about thirty miles without either grass or water—a feat difficult for a veteran Mexican mule, but altogether impossible for oxen, if attempted during the heat of the day—so, just as the sun's red disc was sinking behind the ridge of the distant coast-range mountains, we got into motion. The moon was young, but the star-spangled heavens enabled us to keep our trail without difficulty until we came fairly on the open prairie, when we resorted to the old arrangement of taking it in turns to walk in advance and pick out the line, which was not much travelled at the time; for should it happen that we diverged much, we might be caught in the succeeding sun at a great distance from pasture, water, or shelter, as the vegetation on this entire tract was actually singed to the roots. Our progress was slow but sure, with a few scattered guarantees of dead oxen and broken-down waggons. When we were six hours at work, we unhitched, to give the cattle a little rest in the absence of any other comfort, they seemed perfectly aware of their position; for, after a very limited survey, they all lay down, while we unsaddled the horses, and fastening the lariats to our legs or wrists, followed their example on our well-aired couches, the ground being still unpleasantly warm; all, however, enjoyed a sound nap, the first that awoke starting up the balance.

We plodded on steadily, expecting that daylight would reveal to us some natural hospitality; and never did sailors, after a long cruise, yearn for the loom of the land more eagerly than did we, for the indications of water and vegetation. But daylight broke, and expanded into warmth without disclosing any of the wished-for symptoms, producing a general pause of disappointment; and as we strained our vision in the search, I conceived the poor beasts peered piteously with pricked ears in the same direction. All around and about, however, was a flat, brown plain, bounded by the horizon; that our course was right we were assured of, by the solitary trail and the sun's elevation; still it pained me as we urged on our tired animals. We journeyed for two hours' more, the sun beginning to blaze out with great strength, when a long line of faint specks were descried, which, in our apprehensive frame of mind, led us to fear we were surveying the shadowy phantoms of mirage. Another mile, however, relieved our suspense, exhibiting the unmistakable outline of timber, the bare view of which revived us, and had clearly an exhilarating effect on both horses and oxen, who mended their pace of their own accord; but it was blazing noon ere we got into the shade of their foliage close by the golden stream of the Sacramento; and although the cravings of appetite were very importunate, the predominance of languor and fatigue asserted their influence on both men and beasts; for, after slaking our thirsts in long and reiterated draughts from the cool current, all lay down to rest without partaking of any food.

We resumed our journey after a few hours' repose and a hurried repast, coming to excellent quarters for the night, about nine miles further on, by the margin of a cool, pellucid creek, flowing towards the Sacramento, where one of our party killed a fat doe—on some chops from which we regaled ourselves sumptuously. Our next day's march involved the crossing of another parched plain, of about seventeen miles in extent, which brought us to a ranch occupied by a person named Fair, who had numerous droves of oxen and horses herded by Indians. His house stands in the centre of a fenced-in space, on which, by means of irrigation, he raised a sickly crop of corn and vegetables. It is a comfortable tenement, two stories high; the first constructed of logs, the other of clabboards, roofed with shingles, with a verandah around three sides; stables, sheds, and a corral adjoining the fourth, strewed over with corn-cobs and straw, on which young foals, calves, and pigs were disporting themselves.

Before the discovery of the mines such establishments as this were the head-quarters of genuine unaffected hospitality; where the enterprising emigrating settler, or the investigating traveller, might take up his abode without invitation, and enjoy, not only the products of the ranch, but whatever grocery luxuries the premises could afford, all ministered with a bountiful, good-natured cheerfulness (as I am informed), leaving the travel-toiled recipient at comfortable ease, to recruit himself until he chose to resume his wanderings, when a leave-taking, mutually regretful, ensued, unleavened by either guile or hypocrisy; but now-a-days, "a change has come o'er the spirit of their dreams;" the emotions of nature are transmuted into the promptings of avarice, and the greetings of friendly communion have degenerated into a calculating welcome, without even a traditionary tinge of that hospitality which bloomed and bore its sweet fruit one short year before. The rural host has now donned the airs of a clumsy boniface; the wife drops the propitiatory curtsey of the landlady; the helps, waiting for orders, survey the equipage, as if to calculate the resources of the owners; the very children affected by a trained reserve, which completed the melancholy triumph of sordid avarice over the natural emanation of kindliness and the best feelings of humanity. Such is one of the revolutions wrought by the discovery of gold, and no doubt others of as strange and more portentous character will follow.

We called at Mr. Fair's domicile, and found the interior even more comfortable and better furnished than we expected. Seeing so many young calves about, we made sure of a profusion of milk and butter—rarities we had not tasted since we left the Mormon city; but they were rarities for which we had to pay smartly—a small-sized cup full being estimated at twenty-five cents—a rate of charges that curbed our longings effectually. After getting a way-bill from the host (which he gave with a bad grace from our stingy expenditure), we proceeded eight miles further to the crossing of the Juba, where there was a formidable encampment of Indians, of more stalwart stature and proportions than those further south, and exempt, so far as I could see, from any external indications of that insidious complaint so prevalent on the Lower Sacramento, whither, I presume, it was carried by mariners, who had easy access from the coast. Mr. Fair told us we had nothing to apprehend from them, as they were in the habit of living amongst and working for the miners in the contiguous diggings; however, their number and our paucity counselled precaution.

They learned the art of gold-digging, it was clear, for they came to offer a trade of dust for guns or pistols, but there was only one old carabine that we would part with, for which they readily gave two ounces, all we asked; we got in addition, two fine trout for a few biscuits, for they are very expert in catching fish with spears and in willow-traps, with an aperture like that of a salmon-box, into which a fish can enter with ease, but cannot return. Those they place in artificial currents, into which they turn different shoots of the river by rows of stakes and brush, constructed in the shape of eel-wires. Juba River is a fine stream of good dimensions, deep enough for navigable purposes, a considerable distance up to where it widens out at the ford, passing over a broad, level, gravelly bed. Its waters in the stream appear of a greenish hue, but when taken into a glass are perfectly colourless, clear, and well-tasted; it is a tributary of the Sacramento joining Feather River a few miles above its mouth. The ford itself offers no obstruction to the traveller, but the entrance and exit are very bad indeed, both steep, and composed of loose fine sand that slips from the tread, rendering anything like heavy draught impossible. We accomplished it mainly with ropes, and encamped rather early a few miles beyond it, in a sycamore grove, where odd tufts of coarse grass, that retained some remnant of their succulent properties under the fostering shade of some scattered timber, offered middling feed for the animals.

I rode on a few miles to see the mining operations, for which the river had attained a high character, and found a considerable settlement, I saw by the result of their afternoon's labours that they were making very good wages. There was one large cumbrous machine driven by a stream, diverted from the river higher up, in which there was a quicksilver compartment to perfect the entire process at the one operation; but it worked lazily, and, as I heard, ineffectively, not turning out as much gold as the simple cradle, worked with half the number of hands, for this leviathan washer kept a troop of men raising and feeding it with dirt. The gold of the Juba ran larger than any I had previously seen, but not of so pure a quality as that of the Weber, and was beside exceedingly capricious in its deposits, one mess making handsomely, while their next neighbours, to use a mining phrase, were scarce able to "raise the colour;" so that when a good location on it is worked out, it may be a matter of tedious search to hit upon another. I got a billet for the night with a party, amongst whom there was a few of the "hereditary bondsmen," but was at my own camp in the morning before they had made their toilet.

Our trail next day over to Feather River took a more north-west course, and was very trying from the number of deep gullies and dry river-beds we had to cross. There was nothing of a fertile character in the nature of the soil, nor any striking feature in the aspect of the country, beyond the few old oaks that were met with at long intervals on our march. We pitched our tents on a high bank overhanging the ford of the river, from which we had under our gaze a large Indian village below it, on the opposite side; there was a sort of half-shaded dell near our camp, where we drove the animals, the grass being tall, but of the tinge and nature of old hay; however, for want of better, they eat it with a good appetite. We were not well settled when a party of Indian visitors waited upon us—good-looking fellows, and well limbed: they both talked, and understood a little Spanish, promising us fish, and giving us all assurances of friendship, which, nevertheless, they soon after attempted to betray. Two of our party, having gone out in pursuit of deer, parted company, each attended by a few Indians, who, the moment "D." discharged his rifle, seized hold of it by the barrel, endeavouring at the same time to pinion him and extract his bowie-knife from the sheath: he was fortunate, however, in having a revolver in his belt, with which he soon put them to rout, the savage who wrested the rifle from him dropping it in his flight. The other deer-stalker did not happen to meet any game, and consequently escaped with his rifle and his scalp, for had he had occasion to shoot he might probably have been minus both, not having any side-arms.

Some short time after our men returned to camp, the chief and his squaw, with four attendants, approached, evidently with the intention of explaining away the affair, and apologising for his subjects' conduct; but we resolved they should not come again into our quarters. So I went forward, beckoning them back in rather an angry mood, at which I could see the old potentate was nettled, but, like a good tactician, who understood and appreciated the seductive influences of female interposition, he brought forward his royal partner, both making soothing and conciliatory gestures. However, by an unusual effort, my duty overcame my gallantry, and I resisted the soft blandishments, repeating my repulsive motions with a growl in the unknown tongues; upon which the old chief flared up with great rage and savage dignity, rushing forward a few steps, and shouting out, in a voice of madness, "Arra, arra, arra!" at the same time swinging the back of his hand very violently towards us, which one of our friends understood was tantamount to warning us off his territory in the most peremptory manner. He then retired, and we had sufficient light to see, when he returned to the village, that he mustered all his men around him, gesticulating violently, all looking in the direction of our camp.

I felt so satisfied they would attack us before morning, that I arranged a general watch of all hands for the night, carrying all the arms we could stick around our persons, which we previously shot off, for the double purpose of loading them anew and letting the enemy know the strength of our armoury. Between rifles, revolvers, double and single-barrelled pistols, and double-shot guns, we came up to the formidable number of fifty-three discharges—a pretty fair amount for a cohort six strong, which produced a very warlike effect, fired in quick but regular succession. We then picketed our horses in a crescent form, hemming in the oxen between them and the steep bank, on the edge of which stood the waggon, distributing ourselves at equal intervals, marching and countermarching, without exchanging a word for a few hours, or being able to notice any strange or hostile movement.

At length the uneasiness of one of the horses put us upon the alert, and the next moment some arrows whizzed past us, upon which Mr. S——e fired a load of buck-shot in the direction he supposed them to come from, which elicited a perfect shower, one taking effect in his shoulder, others wounding three of the oxen and one of the horses. The discharge was followed by a quick movement, rendered audible by the crushing of dried leaves and branches, which guided us, in some measure, in our aims, as we fired one round; soon after which all noise was hushed for the night. Mr. S——e's wound was slight and superficial; but there was one of the oxen rendered unfit for present use, thus reducing our team to two yoke. We could not ascertain if we wounded or killed any of the assailants, as, if at all possible, they carry off their dead to prevent their being scalped, which next after death they are most fearful of. But when morning broke we saw them mustered in all their forces on the bank above the ford; from which position, I suppose, they calculated to intercept our crossing and enjoy perfect security, while we would be altogether exposed to their arrows and missiles.

Their numbers, as closely as we could compute them, were from ninety to one hundred—rather an overmatch for six; but our fire-arms counted largely in our favour, and our prompt determination turned the balance; for had we hesitated or wavered in the least, it would have given those savages a confidence which might have completed our destruction before we could check it. So, after a very early and simple breakfast, we commenced preparations as if nothing occurred, or nothing was apprehended, another and I going to the edge of the bank, with two rifles of the largest calibre, that would carry well over to our opponents—a distance of five hundred yards—which I believe they conceived impossible; for when I raised my gun to cause them to retire, they set up a hideous yell of derision, which was soon lulled by the fall of one of them. My companion, an excellent marksman, also fired, and hit the chief, who reeled, but did not fall; after which a hurried and general movement in retreat took place, that stayed us from repeating our discharges, showing them all we required was a free and unmolested passage.

After some little delay in tending their wounded, they planted themselves in about equal numbers on the tops of their huts, which are formed by excavating the earth in a circular form, about twelve feet in diameter and four feet deep, then bending over them, in a semiglobular form, stout saplings, and binding and twining them closely with vine tendrils, over which they put a coating of adhesive clay, that renders them impervious to rain, an opening large enough to admit of entrance in a crawling posture being left in the side, on a level with the ground. In external shape they resemble a mound; consequently, at a distance, the village had the appearance of a number of little tumuli, and the Indians on their crowns, armed with all their primitive weapons, produced a strange picture, entirely in keeping with the locality. They took up their position with a quiet but determined air, showing they were resolved to repel our apprehended assault, and defend their "household gods" to the death. As soon as we observed their determination, my companion and I crossed over, leaving two others in our old position, and under cover of our guns the waggon commenced crossing—a task of doubtful completion, owing to the steepness of the banks, the crippling of our team, and the absence of manual assistance, as we were otherwise employed; however, after a multitude of pauses, and a large expenditure of wattles, the thing was accomplished, and our march continued, with all our arms in requisition, having for despatch made cartridges for all our guns and rifles.

As we receded from the village the Indians descended, but did not attempt following; nevertheless, we bore in mind the rule of Indian retribution, which is two lives for one, and resolved to keep a vigilant look-out while in their territory. It is a deplorable circumstance that, even after the offending party have passed on, they satiate their unquenchable revenge on the first white-skin they catch in their power, which often hurries an innocent and unsuspecting victim to a premature death.

The trail now wound through a sycamore and white oak grove that fringed the river, whose sloping bank was covered with an infinite variety of shrubs and evergreens, arrayed in glossy verdure, bearing flowers and blossoms of most delicate beauty and exquisite fragrance, amidst which, tangled festoons of the indigenous vine drooped with the pendant bunches of purple grapes. Arbutus was the only shrub I was familiar with, but its unusual size made me almost doubtful of its identity. The manzanita was also thickly interspersed, whose berry

I found was equally a favourite with the Indian and the grisly bear: it seems to me a hardy bush, that would flourish in our soil, and be a desirable addition to our horticultural collections. The plain in the neighbourhood was less parched than those we passed over, openly wooded, with enormous oaks, devoid of underwood, just far enough apart to stretch out to full length their gigantic arms. This was the only district I saw since I left Sacramento that bore the most remote resemblance to the ideal charms of that flattered valley; but even it was a wan and faded representation of the gorgeous and florid pictures painted by enthusiasts or speculators.

We nooned very early, for the purpose of allowing time for repose, sufficient to compensate us for what we lost the previous night, and enable us to forego it again on the coming one, which we agreed to occupy in travelling, for the double purpose of evading our foes and getting over a barren prairie of about eighteen miles, on which there was neither pasture nor water. We started at four o'clock, and before dark got upon this bleak and truly desolate district, on which there was not a shred of vegetation, the ungrateful soil being seamed and scored with cracks and flaws, resulting from the heat, and covered with a red cindery stone and drossy gravel, that made it resemble the vast hearth of a great volcano. The poor bullocks limped tenderly over it; and our horses yielded so sensitively, we got off and led them. Several deep, rocky, dry river-beds, added to the difficulties of our march, and tested the creaking joints and mortices of our waggon, none of the soundest at the first.

Before dawn we saw a fire a long way off, and, as we came closer, could see figures moving about it, but were unable to discern whether they were Indians or not; however, as we approximated, two waggons were observable in the glare, which at once quieted our suspicions, and led us to anticipate the neighbourhood of water. They were a section of an emigrant party just coming in from the plains by the northern pass route, and their tale of sufferings was truly heart-harrowing, being piteously corroborated, not only by their own wasted and cadaverous appearances, but by the wretched and emaciated condition of their animals. Still they suffered many, many degrees short of the unimaginable horrors and miseries of those behind them, who were principally constituted of families contemplating a permanent settlement in California, whose waggons were larger, more cumbrous, and more heavily laden with the greater quantity of provision and necessaries a larger mess stood in need of, and the numerous articles indispensable where women and children formed a main portion of the company. From the start those ponderous equipages were difficult to haul; but as the oxen became footsore and leg-weary, and the different camping locations were cropped completely bare of herbage by the multitudes who preceded them, their progress was miserably slow, protracted by long halts of some days at a time, which so consumed the season, that by the time the ridges of the Sierra Nevada were discernible, its peaks and passes were arrayed in their winter drapery, presenting a fearful barrier to the worn-down travellers.

Then, but, alas! too late, did stern but inexorable necessity demand a thorough revision of their loads, and a casting aside of food, clothing, implements, and furniture, which, if abandoned earlier, would have ensured by that time their destinate arrival; and the stupendous ascent commenced with empty waggons, men and grown boys packing the little they could carry, and weakly mothers wading through the snow-drifts, with their younger offspring on their backs; but out of the many who made this inevitable attempt, few were so fortunate as to gain those glaciered crests that gave them a distant view of the land of promise, and those only by forsaking their waggons, animals, and everything save the meagre kit they could carry over such paths in such an enfeebled state of body. The remainder, making barricades of their waggons, huddled themselves together, hoping to sustain existence on their starved animals till the return of the genial season; but the rigours of this shelterless life proved too much for numbers of those unfortunate beings, many a stalwart man, as well as tender woman, being consigned to their cold graves in a shroud of snow, ere the philanthropic measures of the state came to their relief; and it is difficult, indeed, to decide whether the revolting fate of those wretched creatures who yielded up their spirits on the burning sands of the arid Desert, or those who breathed their last on the icy pillows of the Sierra Nevada, was the most shocking.

We soon sunk the feeling of our minor hardships in the sad interest of the many melancholy episodes related to us by those men, who even in their early passage witnessed scenes and occurrences of the most distressing and revolting character, especially along the Humboldt and on the Desert, where the trail was so thickly strewed with dead, dying, and decaying animals, as to impregnate the circumambient atmosphere with a sickening stench, the unfortunate emigrants, in addition to the horrors of burning thirst, being afflicted with virulent scurvy, and loathsome ulceration of the lips, mouth, and throat, from the use of the abominable water. The poor fellows we met came in for their share of the miseries of the journey; and when they imagined they had surmounted all their trials, on reaching the fabled glories of the Valley of the Sacramento, they were pounced upon by the dire ague of the country, only one out of thirteen having escaped it. Many a bitter tear they shed as they recounted their sufferings, and contrasted the comforts of the home they left with the drear prospects before them. We parted from them before they could muster energy to move, ministering all we could to their grievous requirements.

CHAPTER VII.

Appearance of the Country—The distant Mountains—Reach the Banks of the Sacramento—More Emigrant Camps—Prevalence of Disease—Lawson's Rancho—His Exactions—Dispense some Medicine—Shoot two wild Steers, and divide the Beef—Lawson's Conduct and Ours—Take a Day's Rest—Campfire Stories—Superior Endurance of Females—Leave the Northern Emigrant Trail—Country improves—Friendly Indian Visit—Fork and Ford of the Sacramento—Difficulties of the Passage—Dangerous Affair—Attain the Western Side in Safety—Profusion of Grapes—Pleasing Scenery—Cotton-wood Creek—Returning Diggers—Clear Creek—More invalided Diggers—Lose our Horses—Fruitless Search—The Hire of a Mule—Uncomfortable Night—Give up all Hopes of the Horses—Fresh Bear-prints—Misgivings about the Prudence of an Encounter—Preparations—The Assault—The Chase—The Escape and Conquest—Return to the Trading-post with a paw as a Trophy—Estimate of his Weight—Great Size they attain—French Trapper's Advice how to act when pursued—Their Mode of killing their Victims.

Our course for three days lay over barren hills and plains covered with calcareous rocks and stones, and a reddish calcined clay, that more resembled coarse ashes than earth in its appearance and feel, all clearly the result of great volcanic convulsions. The horsemen were obliged to be constantly on the scout in quest of water and pasture, but their most diligent researches failed in securing a sufficiency of either, which we endeavoured to make up for by giving the animals cornmeal gruel twice a day. As we advanced in our north-west course the ridges of the Sierra Nevada kept quickly slanting in the same direction, until the hills abutting them appeared in the extreme distance to merge into those which jutted from the coast range mountains on the other side, through which the Sacramento forced its copious channel.

On the evening of the third day our eyes were again gladdened by the appearance of timber betwixt us and the horizon, and by forcing our pace we were able to reach the banks of the Sacramento late in the night, where the tinkling of bells and the glowing embers of camp-fires assured us of company who had all retired to rest; but we stirred up, and made use of their fires in cooking our supper, which we enjoyed the more from the conviction that our poor animals, too, had plenty to eat. All hands turned in for the first time, as we had no apprehension about Indians, and the grass was too good to permit the stock to ramble. In the morning, we found our new neighbours were a wing of another broken company of emigrants, quite as afflicted as those we parted from a few days before, both with the sufferings of the journey and the prevalence of scurvy and ague, several cases of the former being of the most aggravated and shocking form. They had been resting and recruiting there for some days; but though wild cattle were abundant in the neighbourhood, they had not strength or energy to make an effort to kill any, and had run down their limited means to a very low ebb in purchasing fresh provision at a large rancho hard by, owned by an unconscionable fellow of the name of Lawson, who established himself there with the view of battening on the destitution of his fellow-creatures, whose line of travel unavoidably passed his door. His tariff of prices were unparalleled even in the diggings; and he appeared just as devoid of charity or the milk of human kindness, as of conscience—exemptions that run and count as sequins in the great game of worldly cribbage in general.

To some of those most seriously afflicted we gave such pickles and medicine as we could spare from our small chest, while a party of our men went out and shot two fine steers, which we drew into camp on waggons, and distributed amongst our new acquaintances, keeping one quarter for ourselves to jerk: it was a most timely and welcome gift, received and acknowledged with tearful gratitude. In the course of the day, however, the fellow Lawson came to our camp in a very rude and insolent manner to lecture us for our conduct, demanding the price of *his* beeves, as he called them; but we met his impertinence with a spirit and determination that very soon changed his swaggering into servility, showing him the hides were without a brand, and giving him a spice of our minds about his cruel exactions, which caused him to sneak off in a most discomfited manner.

We took a day's rest here also, and employed ourselves in cutting up and drying our meat, which was first-rate. In the evening, all those that were able to sit up gathered round our great joint-stock camp-fire, detailing "all their accidents by flood and field," and giving us melancholy corroboration of the sad account we got from those who preceded them. It was a strange feature in the journey, that the few women and grown up girls were comparatively robust and healthy, while the men were worn and ailing, notwithstanding that the greater portion of the hard labour, since their sufferings commenced, even to the hewing of wood and driving the teams, had been performed by the females. Their spirits, too, were high and elastic, and often seemed to counteract the lethargic despondency of the men.

We left them on the morning of the second day, and immediately beyond Lawson's diverged from the emigrant trail, getting into a more fertile and picturesque country than we had travelled through since we left the city, closely intersected with brawling rivulets flowing from the contiguous hills into the Sacramento. The soil was a rich black loam, peculiarly adapted to agriculture, and capable of being irrigated over a large section of its extent; the grasses and clover were not entirely decayed, and must have formed a luxuriant crop earlier in the season. It was thinly wooded with oak, and teemed with wild cattle, deer, and bears, close in by the ravines of the mountains. We had no trouble in selecting a good camping location, where we had a friendly call from some Indians, who brought with them a string of capital trout, which they gladly bartered for biscuit and an article or two of old clothing. They wanted to remain with us all night; but this we would not permit, giving us to understand (as they went away reluctantly) by signs and noises, that they were afraid of being attacked by the bears; but we knew, if we suffered them to stay, the eyes of Argus would not prevent them from stealing.

Our next camping-ground was equally good, close by the banks of the Sacramento, which here forks for some distance, offering the only ford that occurs in its entire course, the first branch of which was not over 100 yards wide, but rapid, and so deep as to enforce the operation of propping up the waggon-bed. The banks, however, were firm and sloping; so, by taking a down stream slant, we got over tolerably easy; but we had then an exceedingly trying tug, through deep sand and loose gravel, for half a mile, over the bar or island to the other prong, which was a formidable obstacle, from its extreme breadth, swiftness, and the round smooth cobble-stones which constituted its bottom, covered with a green slimy coating, that rendered the footing fearfully insecure, while the pellucid water rushing over them in an unbroken current produced a dizzy giddiness, that seemed to affect the animals as well as the men. Another serious disadvantage arose in the necessity of crossing it exactly at right angles with the flood, the formation of the shores only admitting of one going out place; for those only who have tried the experiment can conceive the magnitude of the task of endeavouring to keep oxen (especially) in a point blank course through a rapid river, where, if one happened to fall, the fate of the rest and the waggon would be sealed, as such a check would be sure to involve all in the accident; and, to crown the undertaking, the deep water was not far below, ready to sweep all into eternity.

I rode in just to make trial; but my horse, who was always shy of water, soon slipped to his knees, bringing his nose and half-head under water; he, however, made a gallant struggle, regaining his feet, but wheeling about in the effort, made for the shore, maugre all my efforts to the contrary, which, perhaps, an impartial observer would not set down as of the most resolute order; nor could I get him to try it again in advance. Had he been swept on his side, I verily believe both he and I would have been drowned, for in such a stream I do not think it would be possible to recover from such a position. It was subsequently arranged that one should ride ahead, one ride the near lead ox, one drive from the waggon, two ride below the team to keep them straight, and the other bring up the rear; in this order we went on with really serious misgivings, the more particularly from seeing the lead horse stumbling and floundering every few yards. The oxen managed better in that respect than the horses, but the surging of the current against their sides made them swerve so violently at times, that they jostled the horses almost to throwing them. Once they leant so long and obstinately against them, I resigned all hope, and shuddered for the fate of my companions; but with a heroism worthy of higher achievements, the riders struggled and persevered until we gained a shoal, where we got a breathing lapse, and going up its extreme length head to stream, more than regained our lost ground; besides, the bottom for the remainder of the way was much more level and compact, by which means we proceeded steadily until we pulled out, exhausted, to be sure, one and all agreeing that nothing in the whole overland route was more trying or dangerous.

We stopped to noon on the river edge, where the pasture was good, and the brush along the banks interlaced with vines, bearing "a bacchanal profusion of purple and gushing grapes," not over large, but exceeding juicy and well-flavoured, on which we regaled ourselves not only to repletion, but I believe to excess. We followed the river for eight or ten miles, gradually ascending all the time, until the banks attained an elevation that made one dizzy on looking down them: the country on both sides was charming, its undulating surface studded with noble trees, which to some extent preserved its verdure, backed by bold mountain ranges, the translucent river shining at intervals in its wooded vales.

Next day our course lay as if towards the point of a triangle, not in a straight line, though, but winding through sinuous labyrinths round the bases of hills, through ravines, and along dry river-beds that finally led us into an open plain, pleasingly adorned with crowded clumps of planting, bounded on its northern border by a small river called Cotton-Wood Creek, from the prevalence of that timber along it. There were three waggons encamped there, returning from the diggings on the North Sacramento, in consequence of the prevalence of dysentery and ague there. Their party were all, without an exception, invalids, and strongly remonstrated with us about going further. However, we left them early next morning, and after crossing the creek, entered rather a fertile valley, circumscribed in breadth, skirted by timber, behind which, to the westward, lofty hills arose in fanciful shapes; stretching north, as far as the vision could penetrate, the valley gradually expanded as we travelled upwards, widening into an immense plain, where we again struck the Sacramento; thence it contracted as we approached Clear Creek, which flows eastward into that river. There is a trading-post there, a rude log-building, covered with canvas, got up for the purpose of cheating the diggers under pretence of supplying their wants: we crossed over the creek, camping on the other side amongst a large party of sickly diggers, on their down journey. The grass was all eaten up by the stock kept by the traders, so that ours had no aliment but what they browsed off the thick brush around them; and next morning, when we came to catch them up, we only got our oxen after a crouching search through the jungle.

The waggon went on, another and I remaining to recover the horses, keeping two saddles and bridles. The space on which we camped was in the shape of a peninsula, formed by the junction of Clear Creek with the Sacramento, and not so extensive that they could evade a diligent search; so, after satisfying ourselves they were not in it, we recrossed the creek, and saw by the fresh footmarks and the lines formed by the dragging of the lariats, that they had taken the back trail. We followed up those marks for four miles, until they diverged into the bush, when they were no longer apparent. My comrade and I then chose each a direction and separated, agreeing to meet at the trading-post; but after a three hours' anxious search I commenced retracing my steps, partly abandoning all hopes, and partly in the expectation my friend had found them; but on my return I found him there before me, without having any tidings whatever of them. We then cooked a rude repast of fried pork and hard bread, that cost us the moderate sum of two dollars each, and set out upon another trial, giving ourselves a latitude as far back as Cotton Wood (sixteen miles), where we thought they might have been allured by the good grass, for without them we could not proceed to Trinity, our destination. The last ninety miles being merely a pack-trail, over steep mountains, and one of the most impracticable character, we deemed it prudent to separate ourselves, my companion taking the home circuit; and mine, being the more distant, I hired a mule of a most Rozenantish pattern from one of the traders, such an animal as is called a "Crowbait" in Yankeeland; however, his threadbare appearance did not subtract from the owner's estimate of his services, one ounce per day being the rate of hire. We moved off briskly, for his movements were better than his looks gave promise of, and I did not encumber him with a heavy knapsack of provisions. I saw nothing of the horses up to the point where I before halted, and from thence I kept quartering the plain until night, like a vessel beating to windward, without getting any trace of them; then picketing my mule and taking some slight refreshment, I lay down to rest, but did not enjoy much repose, from the nipping coolness of the night and the incessant howling of the coyotes, who came at times so close, and in such numbers, I was afraid to encourage sleep. I therefore looked anxiously for the dawn, getting into the saddle at the first peep of twilight, and reached Cotton Wood without any better fortune, not having left a nook or likely clump unsearched.

I now took a long farewell of the horses, and turned northward, selecting a line close in by the base of the hills, going along at an improved pace, with a view of reaching the trading-post the same night; but stopping in a gully to look for water, I found a little pool, evidently scratched out by a bear, as there were footprints and claw-marks about it; and I was aware instinct prompts that brute where water is nearest the surface, when he scratches until he comes to it. This was one of very large size, the footmark behind the toes being full nine inches; and although I had my misgivings about the prudence of a *tête-à-tête* with a great grisly bear, still the "better part of valour" was overcome, as it often is, by the anticipated honour and glory of a single combat, and conquest of such a ferocious beast. I was well armed, too, with my favourite rifle, a Colt's revolver, that never disappointed me, and a nondescript weapon, a sort of cross betwixt a claymore and a bowie-knife; so, after capping afresh, hanging the bridle on the horn of the saddle, and staking my mule, I followed the trail up a gully, and much sooner than I expected came within view and good shooting distance of Bruin, who was seated erect, with his side towards me, in front of a manzanita bush, making a repast on his favourite berry.

The sharp click of the cock causing him to turn quickly round, left little time for deliberation; so, taking a ready good aim at the region of the heart, I let drive, the ball (as I subsequently found) glancing along the ribs, entering the armpit, and shattering smartly some of the shoulder bones. I exulted as I saw him stagger and come to his side; the next glance, however, revealed him, to my dismay, on all fours, in direct pursuit, but going lame; so I bolted for the mule, sadly encumbered with a huge pair of Mexican spurs, the nervous noise of the crushing brush close in my rear convincing me he was fast gaining on me; I therefore dropped my rifle, putting on fresh steam, and reaching the rope, pulled up the picket-pin, and, springing into the saddle with merely a hold of the lariat, plunged the spurs into the mule, which, much to my affright, produced a kick and a retrograde movement; but in the exertion, having got a glimpse of my pursuer, uttering a snort of terror, he went off at a pace I did not think him capable of, soon widening the distance betwixt us and the bear; but having no means of guiding his motions, he brought me violently in contact with the arm of a tree, which unhorsed and stunned me exceedingly. Scrambling to my feet as well as I could, I saw my relentless enemy close at hand, leaving me the only alternative of ascending a tree; but, in my hurried and nervous efforts, I had scarcely my feet above his reach, when he was right under, evidently enfeebled by the loss of blood, as the exertion made it well out copiously. After a moment's pause, and a fierce glare upwards from his bloodshot eyes, he clasped the trunk; but I saw his endeavours to climb were crippled by the wounded shoulder. However, by the aid of his jaws, he just succeeded in reaching the first branch with his sound arm, and was working convulsively to bring up the body, when, with a well-directed blow from my cutlass, I completely severed the tendons of the foot, and he instantly fell, with a dreadful souse and horrific growl, the blood spouting up as if impelled from a jet; he arose again somewhat tardily, and limping round the tree with upturned eyes, kept tearing off the bark with his tusks. However, watching my opportunity, and leaning downwards, I sent a ball from my revolver with such good effect immediately behind the head, that he dropped; and my nerves being now rather more composed, I leisurely distributed the remaining five balls in the most vulnerable parts of his carcase.

By this time I saw the muscular system totally relaxed, so I descended with confidence, and found him quite dead, and myself not a little enervated with the excitement and the effects of my wound, which bled profusely from the temple; so much so, that I thought an artery was ruptured. I bound up my head as well as I could, loaded my revolver anew, and returned for my rifle; but as evening was approaching, and my mule gone, I had little time to survey the dimensions of my fallen foe, and no means of packing much of his flesh. I therefore hastily hacked off a few steaks from his thigh, and hewing off one of his hind-feet as a sure trophy of victory, I set out towards the trading-post, which I reached about midnight, my friend and my truant mule being there before me, but no horses.

I exhibited the foot of my fallen foe in great triumph, and described the conflict with due emphasis and effect to the company, who arose to listen; after which I made a transfer of the flesh to the traders, on condition that there was not to be any charge for the hotel or the use of the mule. There was an old experienced French trapper of the party, who, judging from the size of the foot, set down the weight of the bear at 1500 lbs., which, he said, they frequently overrun, he himself, as well as Colonel Fremont's exploring party, having killed several that came to 2000 lbs. He advised me, should I again be pursued by a bear, and have no other means of escape, to ascend a small-girthed tree, which they cannot get up, for not having any central joint in the fore-legs, they cannot climb any with a branchless stem that does not fully fill their embrace; and in the event of not being able to accomplish the ascent before my pursuer overtook me, to place my back against it, when, if it and I did not constitute a bulk capable of filling his hug, I might have time to rip out his entrails before he could kill me, being in a most favourable posture for the operation. They do not generally use their mouth in the destruction of their victims, but, hugging them closely, lift one of the hind-feet, which are armed with tremendous claws, and tear out the bowels. The Frenchman's advice reads rationally enough, and is a feasible theory on the art of evading unbearable compression; but, unfortunately, in the haunts of that animal those slim juvenile saplings are rarely met with, and a person closely confronted with such a grizly *vis-à-vis*, is not exactly in a tone of nerve for surgical operations.

CHAPTER VIII.

Our Travelling Kit—Beautiful Country—Description of the Scenery—Gold Diggers' Colony—Stop there—Situation of the Settlement—Salt Springs—Mining Operations—Extraordinary Seat of the Gold—Universality of the Deposits in that Region—Make up an Exploring Party to break fresh Ground—Starting of the Expedition—Our Accoutrements—Another Bear Spring—Mr. Myers' Advice—Monster Fire—It attracts Deer—Early Start—Unexpected Indian Visit—Their Appearance—Their Name for Gold—Coney-cum-Quero—Its mode of Preparation and Cooking—How it was relished—Advice to M. Soyer—Indian Propensities—Water in their Language—Character of those Indians—Their Jealousy and want of Hospitality—Find abundant Evidence of Gold—Our Party scatter, and the Stragglers are attacked—We disperse the Indians—They rally, and show Signs of Fight—Their Style of Warfare—The Result—Strike the Sacramento unexpectedly—Indian Camp on the other side—Their Demeanour and its Cause—Our Night Quarters.

WE left next morning, with our saddles, saddle-blankets, and bridles on our backs, which we found exceedingly cumbersome in the heat of the day, so much so that we were on the point of abandoning them several times. The country through which we passed was beautiful in the extreme;—no grand expansive views, but circumscribed tracts, resembling pretty parks and lovely lawns, with shady dales and glades, enclosed by sloping hills, abutting against others that reared their pine-clad heads aloft, until their peaks diminished into points, their ridges into blades, forming the mighty spurs of the leviathan ranges east and west, from whose cones, in the early season, started those numerous rivulets, whose dry beds crossed our path, and along whose banks still flourished the beauteous shrubs indigenous to the country, trelliced by vines laden with luscious grapes, venerable oaks standing at intervals, like guardians of the locality, under whose shade wild cattle screened themselves from the glare of the sun, narrowly watching the movements of the two travellers who were plodding wearily along. On our right the Sacramento flowed noiselessly past, at times approaching and inviting us to taste its cool translucent current, and again receding so abruptly amidst the hills, as if taking a farewell leave. The trail was admirably chosen, now stretching boldly along the level surface of those sylvan grounds, and then winding cunningly round the hips of the hills, so as to cheat them of their acclivities; but as we advanced we ceased to meet a continuation of those sweet scenes, whose sequestered loveliness deliciously enchanted the senses, hushing for the time the pinchings of fatigue and the promptings of avarice.

Our course now became sensibly steeper and more rugged, the timber and brush increasing in density, and stirring with animal life both bear and deer, as their tracks indicated; but as we were not in a hunting mood we did not molest them. Towards evening we gained a considerable elevation, on which the sound of rushing waters, and the faint report of fire-arms, struck gladly on our ears, giving us assurance of the contiguity of our comrades; so we pushed gaily forward, and reached in the gloaming the brow of a lofty bluff, along the base of which, by the margin of the river, was a regular little colony of gold diggers, whose snow-white tents, distributed in neighbourly clusters in the open spaces, the several camp-fires, with the groups around them preparing the evening repast, and the cattle, with their many tinkling bells coming down from the adjacent heights to slake their thirst, formed a scene over which the distended eye was delighted to gaze, and the fond imagination to hover, conjuring up pictures of sweet primitive habits and unalloyed felicity; illusions, alas! the very antipodes of the reality. We lingered here awhile, not so much for the sake of rest, as to feast upon the view beneath us.

Supper was just commenced when we descended, and we contributed in bringing it to an over-hasty conclusion, our names, to use a vulgar phrase, not being put on the pan; and afterwards held a consultation as to our further movements, when it was unanimously agreed that, in consequence of the loss of our horses, we should halt where we were for some days, to examine the mines, and endeavour to obtain other animals. In the morning, taking a survey of the locality, the first object that attracted our admiring attention was the Sacramento, which, even at that distance from its mouth, was a noble stream, though at its lowest level. It was not amazingly broad, but very deep, and rapid exceedingly, rushing complainingly through the scraggy channel awarded it by the contiguous hills. The banks were bold, leaving no marginal space save at the settlement, which stood on either side of a stream called Middle Creek, from its central position betwixt two others, called Salt and Rock Creeks, all three having their rise in the western hills towards the coast range, holding parallel courses, and emptying into the Sacramento on its western bank, within half a mile of each other, and all rich in golden deposits, proving that the grand golden laboratory is not confined exclusively to the bowels of the Sierra Nevada.

Those creeks are all deeply impregnated with the saline mineral, especially Salt Creek, where there are numerous springs, round which pure coarse salt can be gathered in large quantities. Their streams had then subsided into strings of stagnant pools, which were crowded with diggers, who formed, at the time, the northernmost parties on the Sacramento or its tributaries, making, then, from one to three ounces per day, though the richest superficial veins had been exhausted. There were very few cradles or washers at work, nearly all being employed in scraping out the crannies and pockets of the rocks with spoons, and splitting the chinks with narrow picks and large knives. It was a process new to me, but so simple, and involving so little labour, that I was soon at work amongst the busy throng. The loose rocks and stones in the beds of the creeks were hard, and of different formation generally from the stratum forming the beds of the creeks, probably rolled down, in the process of time, by the action of the water, from the granite masses at the source of those rivulets. Amongst them had been found, by the earlier visitants, innumerable large chunks and lumps, some perfectly pure, others largely amalgamated with the gold blossom, as the miners call the crystalised quartz. Several large specimens were found during my sojourn, weighing from two to six ounces, and one as much as seven pounds, with a very insignificant amalgamation. The bed was a sort of fleaky sandstone, in irregular strata, which, when struck with a sledge or hammer, opened into countless minute seams, joints, and fissures, into which the miner inserted the point of his knife, very rarely requiring the pick to prize them asunder, finding betwixt the laminæ thin cakes of gold almost incorporated with the rock by the adhesion of cohesion, existing in greater or less quantities throughout the entire stratum, even to its lowest depth, evidently established there since its original formation, for no process, however subtle, could subsequently so insinuate it into the heart of a solid rock.

I have seen some miners go clean down through a very deep stratum, and find gold in large quantities below, which impressed me with the idea that the gold on the surface is but the crumbs of volcanism, and that the great deposits of the solid metal are deep in the bowels of the earth. Many old miners were so firmly impressed with this conviction, that they resolved, in spring, when powder and proper implements could be procured from below, to sink deep shafts in select places, and give the experiment a fair trial. I did not confine myself to one system or one locality, but had a turn at each, trying in the course of my rambles the soil in innumerable places and at various elevations, finding, I may say, gold, more or less, everywhere, in many instances exposed on the surface on lofty hills. I also visited an extensive mining settlement to the westward, called "The Springs," or "Redding's Diggings," said to be very rich. Here the miners had no streams or river-beds for the seat of their operations, working in the various ravines and gulches, where the drainage of hills formed their several little streamlets. Theirs was almost all dirt cleansing, and, from the results I saw, was highly lucrative; but the health of the miners was very bad, owing to the property of the water in the springs, which became more unwholesome as the season advanced, and the want of vegetables with their salt junk.

After having explored every nook and corner in this extensive neighbourhood, I was anxious to break fresh ground, and did not experience much difficulty in getting up a party for the purpose, as from the crowds that daily came flocking in the place became uncomfortably thronged. A meeting was held at which the feasibility and practicability of getting beyond the Sacramento was discussed, where the creeks and gulches looked most invitingly towards us, when it was resolved that an exploring party, chosen at the time, should set out the day but one after, employing the following one in constructing a raft. It was also determined not to confine their researches merely to the edge of the river, but to go back to the cañons of the loftier ranges, which could be seen about thirty miles to the eastward.

Twenty men assembled on the morning of the appointed day, our mess contributing another and myself, but from the rapidity of the current, and the unwieldy piece of naval architecture on which we had to cross it, evening was close at hand when the last man jumped ashore, where white man never trod before; and this very circumstance gave an air of romance to the expedition, not without its peculiar stimulant. As it was a pure matter of chance where we might strike water, particularly in the dark, we formed our camp for the night on a hill-side close by the river, and devoted the few hours we had to spare in trying the creeks close by, some of which we found very rich indeed, and the remainder promising. We started before sun up in the morning with very heavy packs, for in addition to our tools, provisions, and arms, we were obliged to carry a heavy blanket, as the nights now set in piercingly cold, notwithstanding the sultry and oppressive temperature of the days. We shaped our course directly for the highest and most distant of the ridges in view, and had for several miles a most fatiguing march, either climbing, descending, or shouldering through thick tall brush, through which it was a matter of extreme difficulty to drag our heavy packs. There were legions of game about, bear, deer, rabbit, and quail, but we did not shoot any, as we found our loads quite cumbrous enough without any addition.

About three o'clock we emerged into a more open country, entirely free of underwood, and presently came upon a verdant basin of clear land, where, from the richness of the grass and elasticity of the sod, we conjectured there must be water near, which we were all in great need of at the time. We dug in a few of the most likely places without finding any, and were about making another trial, when a cheer from one of our comrades told us the treasure was discovered, in a little pool bearing all the marks and tokens of having been scratched out by a bear, holding very little over a pint, and replenishing so slowly that a long time elapsed before all were satisfied. We then picked out the hole to about two feet in diameter, and left it to rise, in order to get a supply for our coffee, while we set about making a monster fire near at hand, the order of the watch being four to each guard, and two hour spells; for Mr. Myers, the most experienced Californian mountaineer, gave us special warning of the treachery of the tribes of Digger Indians we were likely to meet, and we already aware that all Indians are particularly fierce on the first invasion of their territories.

The night set in clear, but bitingly cold, and about midnight it came on to blow a gale of wind for a couple of hours, which made our great fire bellow and roar, and vomit forth sheets of sparks, that ignited the dry bunch grass and surrounding withered boughs in many places, enabling us plainly to see the deer around them coming up in numbers to look at the novelty, gazing with distended orbs, and stamping the ground in puzzled bewilderment, the guard could have easily shot some, only that the report of fire-arms would start up the sleepers, imagining an Indian surprise.* We were amove at early dawn, and found a more clear and level country to march through than that of yesterday; but Indian trails were becoming more numerous, and appeared as if in constant use; yet still no Indians showed themselves. We moved forward cautiously and compactly, having agreed not to halt for refreshment until we gained the base of the mountains, and towards noon began drawing close to them, crossing several deep dells and close ravines, in which there were abundance of grapes and manzanita berries. We pushed on till we reached the bosom of a steep glen, through which a clear but slender brook trickled, faintly babbling amongst the rocks—a sweet spot to rest in; but as we halted to unburden ourselves, six Indians were positively in the midst of us, no one being cognisant of their approach, so stealthily and noiselessly did they advance. They were perfectly naked, only one carrying a bow and quiver.

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* It is a common stratagem in deer-hunting in America to go into their haunts of dark nights and light a bundle of fagots, the blaze of which attracts any within sight of the blaze, when they become an easy prey to the hunter.

If we followed Mr. Myers' advice, or yielded to our own first impulses, we would have driven them off; but they looked so mild and inoffensive we permitted them to remain. They were rather below the middle stature, but strong, well-knit fellows, their faces daubed with a thick dark glossy substance like tar, in a line from the outside corners of the eyes to the ends of the mouth, and back from them to the hinge of the jawbone, looking at a distance like exaggerated whiskers; some also had their entire foreheads coated over. We endeavoured to disabuse their minds of any hostile intent by signs and gestures, and little presents of bread and tobacco, neither of which they seemed to understand the use of. In order to show them more plainly the object of our visit, we took them to the stream, going through the form of using our picks, shovels, and pans, and then showed them the gold we had in our purses; when they all laughed, exclaiming, "Booie, Booie, Booie," which it seems in their language signifies gold. They made signs to us that it was to be had everywhere around, which was so far satisfactory that we brought them into camp, where we found Mr. Vyse, a Dutch gentleman of our party, in the act of cutting up a noble buck he shot a little up the glen, he proposed we should cook a regular trapper's feast, composed and made up of a dish called "Coney-cum-Quero" (derivation unknown), the *chefs de cuisine* on the occasion being two gentlemen that before had their fingers in a similar pie.

It is made by cutting off a large piece of flesh from a carcase, together with the skin, then paring away a good margin of the meat, so as to afford a selvage of hide that will lap over what remains in the centre, on which you can shake whatever seasoning you have, and then skewer or tie it up closely, placing it on hot embers or stones made red hot (which we did), when, if carefully tended, before the hide is burned through the meat is thoroughly done, juicy and savoury beyond conception, being stewed in its own peculiar gravy. Ours was a regular duodecimo, as indeed it needed to be, from the number of our mess and foreign auxiliaries, being made up of the entire side of venison, from the vertebræ, round by the hips, flank, chest, and shoulder-blade. While it was in process, we took off the keen edge of our appetites by roasting on the coals the scraps and pieces that were cut away in forming the selvage, all watching it with the most careful attention, until "cooked to a curiosity;" and whether it was the whim of a quizzing imagination or not I cannot tell, but I never before tasted a dish that so filled up every crevice of the mouth with an all-satisfying enjoyment, saturating the pleased palate with its succulent tenderness, and leaving such an agreeable after-taste, that one was almost loth to use aught else for fear of dispelling it.

I would advise M. Soyer to give it a place in the next edition of his book; and I hope I may not be deemed presumptuous in expecting that the great abdominal worshippers of the omniverous London corporation will present me with a handsome premium for adding a new idol to their creed in the shape of a "Coney-cum-Quero." It is not necessary it should be made of venison, the flesh of any other animal whose hide is sufficiently tough to bear the fire, would do as well; in fact, I think a fatter meat would suit better.

The Indians remained all night, and lit a second fire at a little distance, stretching themselves, mouth under, between both. There was little doubt but they had a design in staying, for whenever the watchmen's tread ceased, and unbroken silence prevailed, they raised up their heads cautiously, looking round anxiously, but dropping again the moment they saw they were perceived, simulating sleep, which caused us to keep a close eye on them. In the morning, as we continued to feed them, we determined on making them do something to earn their diet, by sending them to bring up water for the morning's use (which in their tongue is called "Bawlee"), and afterwards making them carry a moiety of our packs, which they did with great reluctance, from sheer laziness, being out and out, far and away, the most thoroughly lethargic set of beings, even of their own degraded tribe, I ever encountered. Were it not so, here they could have shambles of meat for food, and skins to trade, after supplying themselves with raiment, which they appear to want, from the sensitive manner in which they bore the evening air. Yet such is their inherent sloth, they are contented to remain entirely destitute of covering, living through the summer and autumn on crickets, berries, and roots, and in the winter and early spring on acorns, which they save, and dried spent salmon, which they catch without much trouble, spearing them in the shallow fords of streams flowing into the Sacramento. Unlike most other Indians, they have nothing to trade or barter; neither are they, as far as I could see, expert bowmen; the only thing in which they attain a respectable mediocrity is swimming. They are excessively jealous of their squaws, for whenever we headed towards any of their burrows, they sent a courier ahead to remove them all; and, as a cap to the climax of their forbidding qualities, they are stingy and inhospitable. It is supposed to be a trait of Indian character, universal amongst the race, their hospitality to strangers when they chance to come amongst their wigwams, no matter how hostile soever their feelings and intentions might be under other circumstances; but amongst those wretches no such virtue seems to exist, for, on one occasion, in passing through their huts, I took a few from a heap of acorns, when the very savages to whom we were so kind, and fed so plentifully, commenced a pitiful whining howl until I restored them; the entire selfishness of which was enhanced by the fact that thousands of bushels of them covered the ground in every direction.

Their information about the gold was perfectly correct, for we found some, I may say, in every place we tried, but, except at our camp, had no water in the neighbourhood to give a full test to our experiments, as the rivulets, gulches, and ravines, were all dry. We tried the dry-digging process; and on winnowing the sand, that we took from the cavities of rocks, in a rough manner, got, in most instances, a residue of gold, sometimes insignificant, at others considerable. After examining all the auspicious-looking places on the western flank of the Sierra in this neighbourhood, we branched into a gloomy defile, with the intention of penetrating to the north-eastern side of the range; but, after advancing a few miles, it took a westerly slant, which we thought it prudent to follow, as our stock of provision would not admit of too protracted an absence.

The country we had now to push our way through were groups of immense hills, covered to the tops with oak and fir, without brush, not so close as to impede our progress, but sufficiently umbrageous to shield us from the sun. As we went along we tried every likely place we came across, and got some gold in all. We soon turned into another and wider branch of the defile, bending more towards the south, hoping to strike the Sacramento and follow its course home, testing its bars and the stream flowing into it as we proceeded, and marched in an elongated string, as the trail, like all Indian trails, would not admit of more than one deep; but some of our party, beginning to lag under the weight of their packs, had tailed off considerably, of which those in advance were unconscious, until the distant report of a gun, followed by a hollos, brought us suddenly up; on hearing which, all simultaneously dropped their packs, leaving four to watch them, and hurried back, in double-quick, nearly a mile, when we espied several Indians on the heights watching our movements, which caused us to apprehend our comrades had been overwhelmed, murdered, and stripped. We raised a lusty cheer to encourage them if in extremity, and hurried our pace to a run, until we came to the fork of the defile, where we saw our five absent men standing in a bunch, rifles in hand, and a horde of those savages in front of them, yelling and gesticulating; amongst whom were our right trusty heach-men, who levanted with the packs we constrained them to carry. They were beyond bow, but within easy rifle shot; but when our reinforcement came up, they moved away further, and after a momentary pause, the chief, with a staff of about a score, showed a disposition to approach us in a pacific mood; a movement we repudiated, beckoning him off, and presenting at him, when he in turn beckoned us away, sputtering gibberish at the top of his voice; but a Mr. Davis put an end to his fierce oration by a double discharge of buck-shot, which made his royal highness and some of his aids skip most ungracefully, the whole body breaking away in fear and confusion.

This occurrence counselled circumspection for the future, as there is no manner of doubt but that the murder of the five men would have ensued only for our return, for they not only tried some long-bow shots at them, but got others to ascend the heights at their back, from whence they had commenced hurling down logs and stones. As we all came together again, and got into motion, we saw our enemies on the heights above in considerable force; and what we seriously apprehended they now began to put in practice, letting loose rocks and blocks of decaying timber, which plunged down the steep hill-sides with a force and velocity that required all our watchfulness and alertness to evade them, so that our progress was, I may say, arrested altogether. They were not slow to perceive our jeopardy, and for once in their lives, at least, were industrious, for they worked with might and main, yelling and screaming as they set their projectiles in motion, getting bolder and bolder, as we could not well make an effort to dislodge them, we crept slowly on, the ridge of the hill declining rather quickly, the inclination of its curve, too, bringing the savages within shooting distance, and as they crowded to a point close beneath which we were constrained to pass, we put forward four men, who carried rifles of the largest calibre, one of which, especially, owned by a Mr. Smith, was admitted to be the "great gun" of the diggings, he first elevated at the savage looking most like the generalissimo, who, curiously enough, seeing he was selected, advanced a few paces, with an air of contemptuous defiance, imagining himself perfectly secure; but Mr. Smith took his measure most accurately, sending his bullet into the centre of his chest, on which, making a frantic leap, he fell prostrate, producing a pause of stupefaction, during which the other three marksmen fired into the crowd, bringing two others down. This kicked the balance of hesitation instantaneously, all of them bursting away for the summit of the ridge, over which we could discern their dark heads timidly peeping to see if we intended pursuit; but of this we had no idea, our object being, if possible, to get to the river before dark.

We were much nearer the Sacramento than we conceived, for in less than a mile, the trail descending rapidly almost all the time, we came square upon it, and directly on the opposite side discovered a very large settlement of Indians, who raised a demoniac yell as soon as they saw us; all their squaws at the same time running up a narrow gorge in the hills, carrying their pappooses. On our side there was a scrap of beach, on which a vast number of miserable spent salmon of enormous size, split, were hung along on poles to dry in the sun, there being a better aspect and exposure than at their camp; and I believe it was the notion that we would carry a portion of them away that begot the tumult. But we never even touched them; and finding that the cliffs were too precipitous to allow of our following the river, we reascended the hills, as around our watch-fires, at the base of such a steep, we could not expect to get over the night in peace or security. A few miles further on we met a creek, where, in the cavity of a rock, we eked out as much water as sufficed for supper.

CHAPTER IX.

Find Gold in the Creek—Strange Excavation in its Bed—Determine on clearing it out—Our large Expectations—Our mode of Procedure—Immense Frogs and Land Turtle—Another new Dish, called "Omnium Gatherum"—Unexpected size of the Hole—Share Market—Anxiety increases as the Bottom is Approached—Wonderful Result—Food for Conjecture—Mining Incident—Continue our Search down the Creek—Indian Village near its Banks—Homeward-bound—First Rain of the Season—Raft Accident—Miraculous Escape—Raft-building by Torchlight—How it did Pour—Californian Rain—The Sacramento rises—Had the Wet Season set in so early?—Its Effects on our Comforts, our Clothes, our Food, our Weapons, and Implements—How we employed ourselves during the Spell—Novel Occupations—Ludicrous Success—Musical Amateur—Strange Musical Contest—Amphibious State—The Sacramento rises higher—The Rain ceases and the Sun reappears—Change of Scene and Employment—Piebald Appearance of the Camp—State of the Ground—All the Stock get Mired—How we Manage—The Miners at Work, again.

In the morning we found gold in the bed of the creek all along as we proceeded, so we followed it down a considerable distance to a point, where, after receiving two respectable affluents and innumerable smaller streamlets (all dry then), it took a decided southerly course. We tried the banks in many places, and several of the bars, in all of which we found abundant evidence that it would be a most remunerative stream to work on when the proper season came round. In the course of our explorations we came to a rocky cañon, where the water tumbles over a fall of twelve or fifteen feet, at the bottom of which there was a large cavity in the rock, quite round at the orifice, about eight feet in diameter, and four feet down to where there was moist gravel, the hole enlarging in dimensions as it descended. Some expressed a great desire to clear it out, and one of the men finding over an ounce of fine dust in a crack on the lip of the rock from which, in the wet season, the torrent is discharged, all hands agreed on the experiment, indulging in golden anticipations of all sorts, many of the over-sanguine setting down the proportions at 1000 dollars, which would not, after all, appear exorbitant, considering the circumstances.

We put in two men with shovels to fill the pans, which were passed up by two others, and sent along a string of four above, from hand to hand, to a place where it was discharged, the empty pans returning by another line, coming up and down with the regularity of elevators in a corn-mill. In a few hours we thus accumulated a large heap of gravel on the bank, but did not appear to make a deep impression on the hole, which bulged out in the sides like a pot. Nevertheless, we worked unremittingly—albeit on empty stomachs, and nothing in prospect to appease the painful gnawings of the worm of appetite—as the presence of water on round stones and coarse gravel afforded us a guarantee that there was no chasm or aperture through which the gold could escape. From the round stones and coarse gravel we came to a layer of coarse sand, in which, curious enough, were frequently sent up immense frogs, as large as young monkeys, and a description of land turtle, that, on the other hand, was of dwarfish proportions, all alive and kicking; the wonder being, that they could have existed under such a superincumbent weight as we removed, which of course was only to be accounted for by the mysterious agency of the *genius loci*, who stationed them there to watch the golden treasure; for if the great dragon of Hesperides himself was only saddled with half the load, the celebrated fruit would not have so long cumbered its branches. In the absence of all other nutriment, we became sudden converts to French cookery, calling into requisition the services of our Coney-cum-Quero artists, who invented an entirely new dish, characteristically christened "Omnium Gatherum," which I cannot, however, so confidently recommend to a generous and confiding public as their previous effort, being composed principally of bull-frogs and land turtle, thinly interspersed with the limbs of a few woodpeckers and one ground squirrel (a much nicer animal than a rat), stewed in the green water that we took from the hole in two of our largest wash-pans, without either pepper, or salt, or any other sauce or seasoning but keen, pungent hunger.

As we left off work at dusk, we took soundings with a pole, and found there were fully five feet yet to clean out; but the hole at this level took an inward curve, that would quickly diminish its capacity for holding; not so the "Omnium Gatherum," which found receptacles capacious enough, and, simple and unadorned as it was, would have all disappeared if we conceded to appetite; but we reserved a portion of this composite mess for breakfast, and were at work under the auspices of the morning star, as it was absolutely necessary we should reach home that evening.

Two feet more brought us to a finer, darker, and heavier sand, the usual concomitant of the precious dust, which sent up the mercury of expectation to such a pitch, that speculators freely offered from four hundred to five hundred dollars a share without effecting a purchase, and, circumscribed as the time was, a miniature system of the Bull and Bear system was got into operation, which hatched its small clutch of lame ducks with a rapidity in keeping with the vegetative and generative character of the country. The game momentarily increased in interest as the bottom was approached; but the increasing depth necessitated us to put in a rude ladder to enable the work to proceed. It was also deemed prudent to appoint experienced washers to test each pan, for the indications of the sand became now truly promising. Silence reigned omnipotent, yet during the intervals of each shovel-stroke, although every one appeared to hold their breathing, there were smothered foreign ventriloquistic sounds, repeated with a rapid regularity, which at last brought me to listen, and discover that "the beating of our own hearts was all the sounds we heard." The sun, too, came at this juncture to take a peep into the nearly empty hole; but the polished shovel returned no lurid flash to his bright ray, the predominant reflection being from the black sand, which, by the time the last panful was removed (sand et preterea nihil), had communicated quite a leaden tinge to our complexions; and then "we looked each other's faces round," but not a word of banter or regret as the men slowly and sadly came up from this great polished deceiver, each wondering, but unable to solve the miracle of the total absence of even a particle of the metal. Wanting other diet, it supplied us amply with food for conjecture and surmise; but the most ingenious and sophisticated could not compose a feasible explanation why it was that the gold, which assuredly came in from above, and which we found in quantity below, being the heavier substance, should be scrupulously ejected, leaving stones, gravel, and even black sand, at the bottom. All the natural and usual operations of cause and effect being at length exhausted, a metaphysical gentleman agreed with himself that preternatural spells must have been at work as well, and that, if the frogs could speak, "they would a tale unfold" that would suit as an appendix to the legends of Croker.*

We now shouldered our traps and went down the creek for at least a mile, finding prospects throughout calculated to console us somewhat for our morning's disappointment; and just when about diverging for home, we saw, further down on the banks of the creek, a large Indian village, of a more permanent character than I thought the Diggers could boast of, the huts being unusually well constructed for that tribe. It was thickly inhabited; the red-skins, arrayed with their bows and arrows, ready as if for an encounter; but we moved off at right angles, marching steadily until we reached the Sacramento at our raft-moorings, about two hours before sundown, when we commenced shipping our first cargo, which consisted of four men with their packs, chosen by lot, as the fumographic attractions on the other side, the dislike of crossing (as the last batches should) in the dark, and the indications of a coming change in the weather, made each anxious to be amongst the first.

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* While working on Rock Creek, the weather being so very hot, we always had by us a pan of drinking water, and close to it stood a tin cup, in which we put the particles of gold as we gathered them. One morning, as we were at work, a thirsty prospecter came by, who asked permission to take a drink, which being accorded him, he filled up the cup and quaffed off the costly draught, without either drinking our healths or leaving even the semblance of a sediment at the bottom. I first suspected there was a little sleight-of-hand in the matter; but from the sincere compunction of the man, and the honest manner he pressed to replace the gold, I firmly believe he swallowed it;—a circumstance which caused us for the future not to rely implicitly, in such cases, on a saving slip, "inter poculum et labra."

It took over an hour to make the first trip to and fro, during which time the clouds began to gather and drop rain, the wind, too, sighing in ominous gusts. I was in the second batch, and got well wet from the heavy rain before I landed, the wind still increasing in violence; and, unfortunately, as the third party were coming over (being now dark), by some bad management or other the raft parted, three clinging to one portion and one to the other. A shout was instantly raised, lanterns and fagots lit, and the shore lined to see how succour could be brought to bear; but their fate appeared inevitable, as over the rapids they should go, where we were apprehensive they would loose their hold and be drowned; but as good luck would have it, that portion to which the three were attached went slick over, and was rounded to in an eddy that whirled it to the shore, not more than two hundred yards below; the other, taking a different shoot, straddled on a pointed rock, over which the intercepted current surged in a frothy foam. There was a deep gut between the rock and the shore which cut off all personal aid, so that the only thing we could do was to shout encouragement to the poor fellow, urging him to try and work his log over the obstacle, telling him how his companions got safely on shore, and throwing lines, with weights attached to the ends, that he might lay hold of them; but he was almost altogether unconscious, from the dashing of the water; still holding, however, with the proverbial tenacity of a drowning man. He remained in this fearful predicament nearly a quarter of an hour, when we saw the log wabbling, as the current evidently rose a little, the rain falling in torrents all the time: another swing, and it broke afloat. "Does he cling?" uttered a hundred mouths. Yes! we could see his head in the torchlight as his log also whirled into the protective eddy; but life was nearly extinct; nor could we release his grasp without using actual violence, and for a long time after we carried him to the nearest tent he did not appear to resuscitate; however, we were overjoyed to see him at length give signs of returning animation; when, leaving him in charge of the only female in the community, we all proceeded up stream to construct a new raft to bring over the remainder, as the river began rising so rapidly, if deferred until morning rafting would be impracticable. It was a truly novel and picturesque sight to see a file of blazing torches and fagots, and the dusky forms of the men at work with their gleaming axes and augurs of a dark stormy night, singing cheerfully, to keep up the spirits of those on the opposite shore. Two first-rate large rafts were solidly constructed in an incredibly short space of time, capable of taking all over at a single trip each; so that, ere midnight, they were safely landed amidst their* companions.

Oh, how it did pour!* I never before saw such torrents. [The biggest tears of *ould* Ireland were but intermittent imitations—mere mizzle—compared with it, as it sluiced down, making the blazing logs "pale their ineffectual fires," until they fairly struck to the rival element.] It drummed upon the tents, spitting through the closest canvas, covering the upper blankets and the pendant clothing with a condensed vapour like hoar-frost; but

* As Kelly writes this, these mining companions [illegible] near the Sacramento River. —Ed.

being unusually early for the regular seasonal spell, only the 30th October, we all crept into our damp beds, trusting that in its fury it would expend itself ere morning. But morning came, and brought with it no cessation. Down, down it flowed in perpendicular streamlets, as thick as an ordinary ramrod, puncturing the ground, which was not as yet mashed into mortar, as if the points of that instrument were inserted into it with mathematical precision. The select few who had stoves could alone make the "sparks fly upwards;" the remainder, with their waggon-covers, endeavouring to construct a species of hearth umbrella to shield them from the water. Noon came, and still down it came, and up rose the Sacramento, turbid and turbulent, its rapid centre and quiescent edges sheeted out into the bush, forming quite a contrast. You could see all hands digging deep channels round their tents, and carrying in limbs of timber and hurdles to elevate their couches from off the cold damp earth. Every one was wet through, and everybody's bedclothes were so thoroughly saturated with damp, we turned in without divesting ourselves of our wet garments.

A second night, chilly and cheerless, converted us to the belief that the rainy season had arrived, and set us cogitating how we should employ ourselves during its continuance. The lighting of fires in the morning was quite a prolonged and doubtful experiment in the ash-pools—no longer pits—where the crackling wood was wont to revel. We built them as close to our tent mouths as possible, prepared to suffer any inconvenience from the smoke for the faintest countervailing glow of heat; all insufficient, however, to dry our dripping clothes or bed covering. Our knives, forks, spoons, tin dishes, and knightly implements, soon got coated over with rust; our fire-arms got woodbound; the provisions, too, suffering their quota. The jerked beef got blue moulded, the flour caky, the sugar treacly, the tea relaxed, the coffee sodden, the powder lumpy, and the brandy *weakly*. Even my fine watch, which I never before caught in a wayward mood, took it into its head to spend the season in a state of torpidity. There was nothing now for it but either a thorough revision and repair of the wardrobe, or card playing, or drinking, or both, for there were no books in the concern, while damp paper was calculated to obscure the clearest ideas committed to it. [Nevertheless, the dull, trieste influences of the time were often chequered with a hearty laugh, resulting from the amusing bungles of the many unlicensed imitators of Crispin and Cabbage, who undertook to flourish the awl and the needle. Boots were in the most urgent want of relief, as most of the crowd, to use a slang phrase, "were addicted to top-boots"—"case why, they got no bottoms;" worn on the principle which induced my countryman to walk in the mud under the canopy of a sedan-chair.] Coats, not being previously much used, did not stand in need of repair; but pantaloons became so grotesquely metamorphosed under the "stars and stripes" with which they were so liberally garnished, it required a strong effort of memory to recognise them. One gentleman in particular, evidently of a retail education, not from any jocose freak, either, caused us an hour of merriment by freckling over his stern with those minute patches until it resembled a map of the Archipelago or Carribean Sea. You could see shirts, in the absence of either father or mother-o'-pearl studs, ornamented with buttons that would be quite at home in the breast of a pea-jacket; and hats that curled up their broad brims under a crisping sun, driven into the slouching attitude; together with many other strange and curious contrasts too numerous to mention....

[In the midst of those our multifarious avocations, one raw gushing evening our ears were brought to full cock by the laudable efforts of a gentleman who possessed a rheumatic key-bugle, that perhaps like its owner was suffering from the roughness of the journey or the climate, for his choicest strains were not of that "charming" quality calculated to "soothe the savage breast," maugre those of a Christian. On the contrary, to travesty the phrase, they were "a discord of harsh sounds," which, as a friend of mine observed, would be certain death to any cow of advanced age in the *ould* country, where they understand music. However, this painful solo was opportunely challenged by the appearance on the sod of a canine amateur, whose musical powers were so decidedly superior, that he silenced his opponent with a few of his quavers, and retired amidst torrents *and* applause. The gentleman and the bugle subsequently made two other paralytic efforts to renew the contest, but old Pompey, who, for fear of such surprises, kept his organ at concert pitch, came promptly to the scratch, and effectually consummated his conquest.]

There were some ugly broils arising out of gambling contentions, and disgusting exhibitions from over-deep potations; but, strange to say, no serious accident occurred, nor sickness supervened, even though I may say "we lived, and moved, and had our being" in water, or positive moisture, making us incline to the supposition that habitude endowed us with semiamphibious natures. This state of things continued without a jot of abatement for nine whole days and nights; the river rising higher and higher, roaring in frantic fury, whirling, like straws on its surging bosom, huge logs and trees that it uprooted and snatched along in its headlong rage, its frenzied temperament madly ministered, too, by the innumerable torrents along its course vomiting in their foaming stimulants. Rock, Middle, and Salt Creeks, now presented impassable barriers to any communication betwixt those encamped on either side, being so backed up by the monster current that they spread athwart the limited level, and compelled the whole settlement to pull up stakes and retreat up the hill-side.

On the morning of the tenth day we were all mightily gladdened and rejoiced at the reappearance of our old friend Sol, beaming effulgently, but somewhat moderated in his fierce temperament. Presto! now there was a magical change of scene, lolling listlessness giving place to bustle, tents were struck in a trice, everything laid bare, and everybody bustling as briskly as the slushy state of the ground would permit to give their spongy cloths and provisions the benefit of the change. Blankets—white, red, blue, green, Mackinaw, and Mexican—were spread out in close contact on the slope with shaggy buffalo robes and sleek counterpanes, flanked with flannel, cotton, hickory, and Jersey shirts, of every tinge and colour; coats, fancy vests, and very unfanciable pants, in companionship with shreddy drawers, together with stockings, long and short, in a most porous condition, judiciously interspersed, in every available vacancy, with green boots, flabby hats, collapsed carpet-bags, powder-flasks, shot pouches, and the various other hunting and defensive accoutrements dangling from the branches; provisions exposed and arms piled where no shade could reach or screen them; forming altogether a unique and variegated scene most curious to behold....

[This done, we went to look after our cattle, which were not seen since the storm commenced; but it proved rather more of a task than any of us anticipated, for at every step, unless the foot was planted on the point of a rock or log, you sank right down to the knee, frequently further, even on the slopes the earth being almost in a liquid state, with barely enough of adhesive consistence to prevent its running in a stream. I could not imagine such a state of things had I not witnessed it. When we reached the cattle, we found them, without an exception, mired down to their bellies, unable to budge; some few were dead, and some mules and horses greatly lacerated in their wild endeavours to extricate themselves; the oxen were more passive, but nearly starved to death, while it was utterly impossible to liberate them until the wet drained off and the ground became firm. The only mode of meeting the emergency was to gather provender and strew it within their reach, which was not a labour of exceeding trouble, as acorns were overabundant, and they all had become accustomed to use them. Thus we ministered to them for a few days, until we were able to extricate those that were unable to relieve themselves.]

Each mess now went to work with their rockers in the different gulches and in select places along the creek's banks, washing the dirt, and getting well paid for their trouble, averaging fully two ounces per man. But the soil was too wet to work to the best advantage, being almost in a state that masons call grout, the heavy metallic particles sinking to the flag or rock as it became disturbed in digging, and escaping the shovels in the crevices and inequalities, whereas, in a drier state, they would be taken up with earth and separated in the process. Some that took the pains of scooping and scraping up the mud from those inequalities with large spoons were amply requited, and many made good wages by following the creek and gulch courses, picking up particles on the margin from which the water had receded, and gathering bits of considerable size that protruded from the bank edges, where flakes of earth broke off by the undermining of the torrents.

CHAPTER X.

More Rain—Digging ceases—The Damp and Chills are attended with Sickness—Doctors and their Charges—Addition to our Mess—Commence Digging out a Canoe—The Agreeabilities of our New Associate—How we hewed, and joked, and promoted Health—Perforated state of the Bark—Studded with Acorns—How caused—Foresight of the Woodpecker—Their Ingenuity and Discrimination—Finish our Craft—Weather clears up—Transport our Goods and Chattels over the River—Miners' Theory—Our Cloak—Miners' Practices—Their Perseverance—We blink them a Good While—The Hunt at Last—Our Seclusion Invaded—What we previously averaged—Hours of Work—Appearance of the Mines—Geological Puzzle—Capital and Machinery required to develop the Wealth of California—Fruitless Search for a Scientific Traveller—Winter sets in—Hunt for new Diggings—Our old Gulch re-enriched—Fresh Irruptions—Make a Party to Visit the Maiden Creek—Find the Water too high—Indian Visits and Thievery—Give some of them condign Punishment—A slight Brush—Our comfortless and insecure Situation—Return to Home Quarters—Diabolical Murder—Perpetrated by Indians—Enrolment of a Volunteer Party to Punish them—The Regions of the Expedition—Position and Number of our Adversaries—The Battle—The Result—Onerous Task of getting home our Wounded Man—Boisterous Night—Both Freeman and Coyle die.

THIS state of affairs kept the miners in buoyant spirits; but they were soon damped again, for, at the end of three days, heavy, humid clouds kept floating overhead, accompanied with sharp squalls and smart showers, which, towards evening, settled down into a thick mizzly mist, of a most dampening and penetrating character, continuing for five nights and days, occasionally changing into wetting rain as a brisk breeze blew up, which rendered the soil wholly unfit for digging, and begat a raw chill atmosphere that began to exhibit its effects in short ague fits, rheumatism, stiff swollen joints, and scurvy. My ankle, which got maimed in the buffalo chase on the Platte, gave me considerable annoyance, both from pain and enlargement; but I prescribed for myself, as the medical tariff all over the mines made a patient shudder more sensitively than the most nauseating tinctures or painful operation: one ounce a visit was the fixed charge, the simplest dose costing one dollar, and anything of a compound quality a quarter of an ounce. Yet, notwithstanding those rates, some got so nervous in their ailments, and anticipated such golden harvests throughout the coming year, that they paid them without a murmur.

As one might as well be outside as under a tent where everything was dripping with damp, our mess, which was enlarged by the admission of two gentlemen, who, from the first, were camped close beside us, concluded we would employ ourselves in digging out a canoe, for having resolved on crossing the river at the earliest opportunity, we were determined on having some more safe and expeditious mode of navigation than rafting. We accordingly selected a noble fir-tree, out of which we got a superb log, thirty feet long, and fifty-four inches in girt, free of bark, on which we set to work in rough-shaping our craft, under the direction of one of our new associates—a seafaring gentleman of great experience, whose natural cleverness, vivacity, and varied information, constituted him a most cheerful and delightful companion, more particularly under circumstances where any agreeable social attribute was sure to be liberally appreciated. None of us were expert choppers, but the best were placed at the points where the most delicate strokes were required, and as we kept hacking and hewing away in the perpetual mizzle, joking, singing, and quickening the circulation, we felt all the better for the exercise, in health, appetite, and spirits.

In stripping off the bark I observed it perforated with holes larger than those which a musket-bullet would make, spaced with most accurate precision, as if bored under the guidance of a rule and compass, and many of them filled most neatly with acorns. Earlier in the season I remarked the holes in mostly all the softer timber, but imagining they were caused by wood insects, I did not stop to examine or inquire; but now, finding them studded with acorns firmly fixed in, which I knew could not have been driven there by the wind, I sought for an explanation, which was practically given me by Captain S——'s pointing out a flock of woodpeckers busily and noisily employed in the provident task of securing their winter's provisions, for it appears that that sagacious bird is not all the time thriftlessly engaged in "tapping the hollow beech-tree" for the mere idle purpose of empty sound, but spends its summer season in pecking those holes, in which it lays in its store of food for the winter, where the elements can neither affect or place it beyond their reach, and it is considered a sure omen that the snowy period is approaching when those birds commence stowing away their acorns, which otherwise might be covered by its fall. I frequently paused from my chopping to watch them in my neighbourhood with the acorns in their bills, half clawing, half flying, round the tree, and admired the adroitness with which they tried it at different holes until they found one of its exact calibre; when, inserting the pointed end, they tapped it home most artistically with their beaks, and flew down for another. But their natural instinct is even more remarkable in the choice of the nuts, which you will invariably find sound; whereas it is a matter of impossibility, in selecting them for roasting, to pick up a batch that will not have half of them unfit for use, the most safe and polished-looking very frequently containing a large grub generated within. Even the wily Indian, with all his craft and experience, is unable to arrive at anything like an unerring selection; while in a large bagful that we took from the bark of our log there was not one containing even the slightest germ of decay. They never encroach on their packed store until all on the surface are covered, when they resort to those in the bark, and peck them of their contents without removing the shell from the holes.

Four days sufficed to finish our craft, about which time the weather began again to improve, a brilliant sun favouring us on the day of the launch, which was not a very laborious affair, for, being cleanly scooped out, she was as light as so much bark, and we were highly delighted to find, on placing her in her future element, that she floated evenly and buoyantly, and was easily impelled at a very rapid rate. We spent the remainder of the day in transporting our traps, provisions, &c., across the river, which was more hazardous than we opined, as the current was alarmingly rapid, and our little barque not altogether so much to our taste when reeling under a smart cargo; however, we got over everything safe before dark, and, ere noon next day, had our tents erected on a nice knoll, in good shelter, with wood convenient, and a clear brook flowing within ten yards of us. There was another one coming down the same slope of much larger dimensions, where we commenced our operations; but it was poor in its deposits, which was not considered strange as running from the westward, for all the old hands insist that no creeks or streams are worth working save those that flow either to the north or south [many experienced Georgian and Wisconsin miners affirming that such is the case in the mines they were in the habit of working, where all the rich leads or veins point north and south, or nearly so. This, if it be the case, may have been influenced by the same natural laws that regulate the vast chains of mountains all over the continent, which uniformly tend in those directions, and may have produced similar results in the greater and deeper seams of gold that I am satisfied exist in California; but that it could effect the disintegrated particles which are abandoned to the caprice of the mountains' thaws, and coerce them into parallel currents, is a doctrine too large for my belief, even though asseverated on authority.]

However, we began our drains and excavations on an ostentatious scale on this unpropitious site, intending it to serve as a cover, should we find a better [(of which I got a tolerable inkling when last over)], as we were well aware that every Sunday we would be visited by our old neighbours, as well from feelings of friendship, *perhaps*, as to find out if we had discovered a better place than their own, when they would not fail to give us the charms of their society, for no mess can shift quarters, either by stealth or otherwise, that they are not thus visited or traced; if by stealth, the moment they are missed a party is chosen of the men most gifted in that species of chase to hunt their trail, who pack provisions and necessaries, setting about it in a most deliberate manner, and are rarely ever foiled—in fact, never returning until they run into their prey, ascertaining the motives of their change, and the results of the movement. I met many of those parties in my rambles, and was often highly amused, where from the nature of the ground the trail would be imperceptible, to see them take a cast like hounds at fault, prying around in a stopped attitude as if bringing in the aid of the olfactory nerves, until one gave tongue, when they all would hark in, and run it breast high again.

Our plan, however, blinked them for a good while, during which we went to work to our rich gulch every day, about a mile distant, working very profitably too, and when any of them came over to test our location by washing a few panfuls out of that at our door, they not only gave up any idea of joining us, but expressed their astonishment that we should be so misspending our time as to persevere in working there. But a little time, and the "cat got out of the bag," as it was but too perceptible that our home mines remained in *statu quo;* so that it was supposed, from the ingenious device, we found out a regular gold quarry. Then commenced the preparations for the hunt, a hurried digging out of canoes, as they could not expect ours (freely given for visiting intercourse) to aid in bringing to light our little mint; but, once started, the sport did not last long; as the hounds were so numerous, and the cover so small, they soon brought the game to view. Within two days afterwards the entire course of the gulch was one continuous file of men, picking and rocking away, converting our secluded, silent, golden retreat into a profane and tumultuous thoroughfare. So long as we were uninterrupted, we generally washed out from fifteen to eighteen ounces a-day, confining our operations entirely to the bed and edges of the stream. The gold was of the purest quality, for the most part in nice sized particles; those of a larger size being always streaked with quartz veins, which, in the hands of jewellers (as I afterwards saw them in Francisco), could be shaped and polished into handsome rings, brooches, and ladies' ornaments. This, it must be admitted, was a very good yield, when it is taken into consideration that, from the cold sharpness of the mornings and evenings, we could not commence washing before ten o'clock, and were obliged to give over at two o'clock, or a little after.

Our new neighbours came across and returned in their canoes every morning and evening, and widened the harvest-field by excavating the banks, most generally with complete success. But the weather, taking a dry and frosty turn for a few days, the slender stream was completely intercepted, and, as a matter of necessity, the whole character of our proceedings changed into dry-digging operations; and not unprofitably either, for, both in the deep crevices and imbedded in the rock, we found the metal in greater quantity, and much larger particles. Like at Salt Creek, it was quite in the heart of the rock, where it must have abided since the original formation, as the rock was sound to the core, and free on the surface from the slightest flaw or fissure through which the gold, even in a molten state, could have gained insertion; the gold fitting its bed with the accuracy of the nicest specimen of inlaying, but in no instance showing that affinity for the rock that it exhibits with regard to quartz, convincing me, as I have before observed, that the surface-scratchings, although their aggregate amount is enormous, are but as the shedding of the grain; and while leaving me still a hesitating sceptic as to its origin and mode of distribution, confirming me in the creed that the great mineral wealth of California is seated deep in the bowels of the earth, only to be developed by associated companies possessed of large capital, who can afford sinking deep shafts and applying mechanical contrivances in removing the unprofitable soil, and keeping under the subterranean drainage.

I often inquired in my rambles, and eagerly sought for some zealous member of the British Association, or equally learned savan, to enlighten me on the subject of this geological puzzle, but never was fortunate enough to stagger across one. If any of such a class did come out to dive into and lay bare the bosom of nature, cupidity must have vanquished their yearnings for immortality, transforming the divine philosopher into the mundane mammon-hunter.

The weather now took a decided winter change; tremendous showers of sleet and frequent heavy falls of dry snow occurring, which precluded the possibility of work, confining our opposite neighbours to their own quarters. But I must do them the justice to say, they improved their opportunity most industriously, as, to all appearances, they swept the gulch clear of its rich contents, constraining us to cast about to find another favoured one, to keep us employed until we could make up a party to go back into the interior, to the creek we discovered when exploring. We met many rivulets with promising indications, but none that would bear comparison with the other. However, before making a selection which we should work, one day, as symptoms of returning fine weather began to manifest themselves, a soft rain succeeding the sleet, the snow melting from off the slopes and hill-sides, a member of our mess, impelled by such commendable feelings as would prompt one to visit an old friend who once upon a time had rendered him a substantial service, before leaving his neighbourhood took a stroll over to the favourite gulch to see how it was affected by the weather, when, to his extreme surprise and delight, he saw through its clear waters the bed freckled afresh with golden deposits; upon which he hastened back with the pleasing tidings; and the day but one after, the water had so far subsided as to allow of our working on our old haunt, with fully our original success, the new treasure having been washed down from the surrounding hills by the melting of the snow; but the folk over the way, in coming back for some of their implements, were also made aware of this rather marvellous state of things, and commenced again their diurnal incursions, until the premises were a second time cleared out.

We now began to arrange definitely for sending a detachment, in conjunction with others, back to the maiden creek, christened, from its richness, "Gold Creek," as an entire transference of our camp-equipage, provisions, &c., &c., would be clearly impossible, even if we had animals, from the deep state of the ground. Things were soon in train, and a party of fifteen set out on a sadly unpropitious morning, with cold sleet driving in our teeth, but we went at it head to wind, carrying immense packs, three of our mess being of the party. The march was a very harassing one, occupying two days; and, to add to our chagrin and disappointment, the waters of the creek were so high that all the banks and bars were flooded beyond the possibility of working them, leaving the field of our labours confined to the little steep gulches running into it, none of which were what might be termed rich in comparison; the weather, moreover, continuing so cold and inclement we could not get more than two hours out of any day for work—even those, such as none but gold-diggers would care to turn out in; and, as if to crown our sufferings and anxieties, we were visited by the Indians, first in a friendly guise; but they soon convinced us they had other designs in view, as our axes, knives, and other articles became suspiciously scarce.

By a little vigilance two of the delinquents were caught "in flagrante delicto," and with a view of checking or abolishing the practice, we seized and tied them up, giving them a right good hiding, under which they howled and cried most lustily. One then was liberated, to whom we made known by signs that the other would be detained, and flogged every day until the several stolen articles were restored, and that, unless this was done within "two suns," we would shoot him. The liberated convict returned rather more promptly than we expected; but instead of being a bearer of the missing goods, he was accompanied with a large band of savages, all armed with bows and arrows, who, by their menacing gestures and loud talk, indicated they came with the intention of releasing the captive, and avenging his and his companion's injuries. As they seemed resolved on coming into close quarters, when we would not have a shadow of a chance, we tried a discharge of buck-shot against their shins, which produced a highly saltatory and salutary effect—such a one precisely as we desired, for they retired in double-quick time, discharging obliquely in their retreat a flight of arrows, none of which took effect; but as we did not follow up the fire, they took courage, and halted on a rise about five hundred yards off, from which they kept yelling and gesticulating at a furious rate. The prisoner, when he saw them retiring without effecting his liberation, set up such an infernal howling we were only too glad to liberate him, giving him a sort of postscript that contained the pith and essence of our feelings.

Well acquainted with their vengeful disposition, we put on an extra guard that night, who could plainly observe the dusky forms of our enemies prowling round in the gloomy shadows of the contiguous trees; but as they saw we were on the alert they did not trouble us. From this we foresaw there would be an absolute necessity for a constant nightly watch, and, as this was most harassing to men faring badly, with insufficient clothing, with our provisions, too, nearly exhausted, the weather inclement, and the gold not over-abundant, together with divers and sundry other persuasive reasons, we commenced our retreat—I should, perhaps, have said, our return to the camp at head-quarters—on the following day, the trail being so affected by the constant wet weather, that it was far advanced in the second night before we got to our destination.

Two mornings after our return Captain S——r went to the door of his tent, from which there was a good view across the river to the mouth of Rock Creek, where a fine old gentleman named Colville, together with his son, a most promising young man, and a respectable Swede named Mansfeldt, had been camped by themselves about a mile from the main settlement, when he immediately remarked that their tent was not observable as heretofore, although there was light in it late the previous night. He called us all to look; but no one could discover any trace of it, nor could we frame a conjecture as to the cause of its sudden disappearance. Feeling some sad misgivings, and having a high esteem for the party, three of us paddled over, and on coming to the site of the tent saw that it was assuredly removed in haste, some slight marks of blood being apparent; but the rain had so effaced them it was difficult to determine, and the space immediately about was in such a puddle it retained no marks of any sort. However, on extending the sphere of our searches, we found at a little distance the iron portion of a pick, with blood and light hair on its point the colour of the Swede's, while further on there was something resembling clotted brains, together with a crowd of Indian footprints, amongst which was one of immense magnitude.

It was now clear a foul and bloody deed had been perpetrated, so we made an active and anxious search, tracing down the footmarks to the river edge, where it was evident they crossed; and a little below, to our great horror and dismay, we discovered the leg of a corpse sticking out of the water in a bunch of willows, which, on being taken out, proved to be that of young Colville, most shockingly mutilated; the head battered to a mummy, seven large knife wounds on the back, and two in the abdomen. There was not any trace of the others, but we conjectured that all must have been thrown into the river after the murder, some eddy of which brought one body to the shore. We immediately assembled the people in the encampment to hold a sort of general inquest into all the circumstances and appearances connected with the deplorable affair, at which but one opinion prevailed as to who were the perpetrators of the slaughter. A rude coffin was next made and the remains interred; and then a consultation was held as to what course should be pursued with regard to the Indians, who, from the footprints on the side where the body was found and those on the opposite shore, most assuredly came from the eastern side of the river; instigated, we sadly concurred in thinking, by feelings of revenge for our late chastisement of them, and the shooting of those who attacked the party of exploration.

It was unanimously agreed that a party should be enrolled forthwith to proceed to their village, and by inflicting summary punishment teach them a lesson that would deter them from again attempting a deed of such bloody treachery. Fifty-two gave down their names for muster and march next morning, but only twenty-seven came to roll call, alleging as their excuse the state of the day, which was certainly awful; but as the prompt retribution would enhance the effect of our vengeance, we set out, nothing daunted, either by the fierceness of the weather or the defalcation in our forces; having arranged our packs on as light a scale as we could safely or prudently venture with, taking only a single blanket each, and four days' provisions measured scant, in order that our movements might be as little hampered as possible with incumbrances.

By great exertions we reached within about a mile of their village the night of the second day, which was piercingly cold; but rather than forewarn them of our proximity, it was agreed to forego the comfort and advantages of a fire, supping, and breakfasting next morning on bread, water, and raw bacon. We thus managed to get within view of the enemy's quarters a little after sun up, which, as I before partly described them, were on an elbow of land, formed by a bend of the creek, that was now so swollen and swift as to leave them very poor chances of retreat, rendering a stubborn fight inevitable. Their men, as we calculated from the number of huts, must have been close upon 200—a very large disproportion to our small band; and what rendered our position more serious, was the fact that, if at any juncture in the affair we slackened, paused, or exhibited the slightest symptom of weakness or repulse, our doom would be sealed; for, hemmed in as they were, they would certainly rush in and overwhelm us; but our mission, we one and all agreed, should be accomplished, as far as in us lay, even should annihilation be the consequence.

We were observed before we came within rifle range, and a wild whoop simultaneously emptied the wigwams of all their male inhabitants, who, with their bows in their hands, were hurriedly slinging on their quivers. We could hear a humming noise of earnest conversation, as if they were advising with each other how to act; during which they often anxiously pointed to the huts, as if in doubt what course to adopt with regard to their squaws and children, whose only mode of escape would be across the creek, where the flood at the time would test the powers of the best swimmer. In the centre of the horde was discernible a savage of overtopping stature, who we set down as the one that left the large footmarks at the scene of the murder. We continued to advance slowly but steadily, under a blinding sleet shower, and as we raised our arms to the word "Ready," they discharged a full flight of arrows, which, however, either fell short or reached us so languidly, that they were easily dodged, as, indeed, most of them can, if well watched, after sixty or seventy yards. Immediately after the discharge, the big Indian rushed to the front, changing the bow into the left hand, and brandishing a tomahawk in the other as if to head a charge; but a discharge of nine rifles, with deadly effect, checked them as they were in the act of bounding to his call.[*] We still continued closing and reloading, and were met with a second discharge of arrows, the big Indian and a large group following their flight, bent upon coming to close quarters, and approaching with hellish yells within short pistol range; when they received a volley of balls and buck-shot from the other eighteen guns, that stunned, staggered, and turned their advance. Once turned, the flight became general and tumultuous, all rushing back amongst the wigwams, and many plunging into the stream, followed by women holding little children in their arms, who were soon swallowed in its curling eddies. We fired a few more shots into their bark tenements, and, from the howls that followed, I should say with fatal results; but deeming that our measure of retri-

[*] Our arrangement was to fire by sections of nine, thus making three of the whole. There were two double-shot guns assigned to each section, and unless under necessitous constraint a second section was not to fire until the first reloaded—the third never; our ammunition being made into cartridges for despatch.

bution was amply filled, we ceased firing, and retired in a cool deliberate manner, after having counted twenty-three bodies on the ground.

It was only then it became generally known that two of our men, William Freeman and Thomas Coyle, had been wounded, the former in the arm through the biceps, the other in the thigh a little below the groin. There was an artery severed in Freeman's case, and the bleeding was so profuse as to produce syncope, notwithstanding all our efforts to stanch it, even with the aid of a tourniquet; leaving us in an anxious state of suspense as to whether we would be able to get him alive to the settlement, where surgical aid, such as it was, could be obtained; indeed, it was a great oversight in the expedition to set out without a surgeon, where there was every reason to anticipate the want of his services, there being, too, so liberal a sprinkling of that profession in our community.

We constructed a sleigh of stout branches and brush, on which we placed Freeman, every man giving up his blanket to make him as comfortable as possible. We made traces and breast-straps of vine tendrils, by means of which six at a time attached themselves to the rude vehicle: it was a most fatiguing undertaking, and slow almost to total discouragement, while it sleeted and stormed without mercy. Never shall I forget the wretched night we passed; without any fire, and all our covering around the poor sufferer; without the slightest shelter either, as the heavy dripping from the trees drove us for choice into the open space, with uncooked food and short commons for our fare. The pipe and cigar, which were ignited with difficulty, seemed to afford the only resource or comfort, and, for the first time in my life, I made an abortive attempt to smoke. The raw, penetrating sleet all but stopped the circulation as we stood knee deep in the mud huddled around the sleigh, to see and concentrate a glow of animal heat around the wounded man; but long before the approach of day we became so wofully benumbed, it was physically unbearable; so we determined on getting into motion, taking chance for the trail, in order, by exertion and exercise, to counteract the paralysing effects of the cold, three of the most active amongst us going forward to the camp for help and provisions, who sent out a relief corps that found us halted, early in the day, from sheer inability to drag the sleigh any further, in consequence of our exhaustion, arising principally from want of food and clothing. We were enabled to light a fire this evening, the rain and sleet having ceased, and were also cheered with warm coffee, or brandy for those who preferred it, which revived poor Freeman, who was at a very low ebb; but he did not survive many days after he reached home, mortification having set in, and soon putting an end to his sufferings. Coyle, too, who foolishly persisted in taking part in the sleigh drawing, found his wound inflamed violently, and, a bad fever setting in at the same time, he was carried off; so that, after all, our victory was rather dearly earned.

CHAPTER XI.

Change back our Quarters amongst the Crowd—Excitement caused by the Regrators—State of the Food Market—Arrival of a Whale-boat with Provisions—Decline of Prices—Sickness on the increase—Its Cause and Character—Doctors abundant—Simplicity of their Laboratories—Obstinacy of Ailments—Novel Deputation—Banishment of the Quacks—Simple and gratuitous Remedies were successful—December Weather—Christmas-day and its Reminiscences—Christmas Fare—Division of Labour—Christmas Morning—Observance of the Day in the Middle Creek Diggings—Devotional Feelings—Our Dinner-table—Get a Present of a fine Dog—Evening Assembly—Arrangements for the Future—Start again for Gold Creek—Richness of the Diggings there—Change of Weather—Indian Attack—Provisions run low—Continued bad Weather—Indian Tradition about the Weather—A Party start for Head-quarters—Stopped by the unusual Height of the Sacramento—Without Food or Night covering—Torturing Reflections—Dreadful Sufferings—Day-dreams of Home, Friends, and Happiness—Pangs of Despair—Revolting Proposition—My tearful Assent—Wonderful Instinct of the poor Dog—State of my Feelings—His melancholy Fate—Flood Subsides—Weather improves—Our Release—Return of the Remainder.

THE day after we got Freeman to his quarters we recrossed the river with our camp-equipage to join the crowd, as we felt we could not retire to repose with any sense of security in open war with the savage tribes, with our number so small and our position so isolated, while we derived no peculiar advantage by being camped on the east side of the river, in a perpetual state of apprehension, when, like the other miners, we could cross over to work, and return again every evening. On our arrival at the main camp, or city, as some jocularly called it, we found the inhabitants in a great state of excitement, which threatened to eventuate in a violent commotion, owing to the avaricious and unconscionable conduct of the few parties that kept stores in those diggings, who, taking advantage of the state of the roads and rivers, which precluded the possibility of fresh supplies coming forward for a lapse of time as they conceived, as if with one accord, acting, as I believe, in concert, jumped up flour from 50 cents per pound to 1 dol. 50 cents; pork, from 40 cents to 1 dollar 25 cents; beans, coffee, sugar, mackerel, and all other indispensable necessaries in the same proportion, together with boots, which were in great demand, for which they charged two ounces for the commonest pegged manufacture. Had the advance been gradual, appearing to keep pace with a diminishing stock, it would have been patiently borne with, but the sudden and unreasonable rise was so transparent a piece of extortion, it created a feeling which it required all the remonstrance and dissuasions of the cool heads to allay; while, curious enough, about a fortnight afterwards, the same violent parties bore without a murmur a further advance of just 100 per cent., raising flour to the famine rate of 2 dols. 50 cents per pound—a state of prices that not only absorbed all the daily earnings, but trenched deeply on the reserve-fund of the miners. However, they were unexpectedly relieved from this ruinous tariff by the arrival of a whale-boat laden with provisions, she worked up within a mile of the settlement, which was eighty miles higher up the stream than any craft had before penetrated. Prices now tumbled to one dollar for flour, all other articles participating in the decline, not so much from the addition to the stock brought in the boat, but from the fear that other similar cargoes would be constantly coming forward; and although none did actually arrive, prices continued at the same reasonable level until a change of weather rendered the waggon-track practicable for light loads, when more than sufficient for six months' consumption came to hand, reducing prices full fifty per cent. lower, at which standard they remained while I continued in the diggings.

We found, also, that sickness prevailed to an alarming extent, particularly land scurvy, owing to the constant use of salt and greasy provisions without vegetables. In many instances it assumed a fearfully loathsome shape, swelling the limbs to an enormous bulk, changing the skin to a deep purple hue, contracting the muscles and main tendons of the legs and arms, so that those members were rigid and useless; enlarging the gums immensely, and imparting to them a gangrenous appearance, not only disgusting to look at, but highly offensive to smell. There was also rheumatism, simple and acute, sciatica, fever, and ague, and several cases of pulmonary ailments, that generally ended fatally, all owing, I suppose, to the severity of the season, and especially to sleeping in damp clothes on the cold wet ground.

But if sickness was rife, doctors were abundant; that is, a class of men who eschewed digging and roamed about, carrying a pair of saddle-bags, one side containing a select assortment of cutlery adapted either for trade or surgical uses, the other stored with a "beggarly array" of little boxes and flint vials, not stuffed with any perplexing variety of drugs, but almost invariably confined to calomel, castor-oil, and blue mass, which were administered in every ailment, skilfully alternated, and judiciously prescribed with regard to the hours of repetition—as to which they were stern and emphatic in their injunctions. I regret, however, to say, that neither the professional skill of this erudite fraternity, nor the virtue of their prescriptions, inspired their patients with either confidence or satisfaction; for it came to be remarked by comparison, that Nature was more successful than Art, and a series of scientific misfortunes having occurred close on the heels of each other, an impromptu deputation of the real democratic order was formed, and proceeded on a round of visits to those disciples of Galen, to indulge their curiosity in inspecting their diplomas, which invaluable documents, they said, they could not think of exposing to the vicissitudes of travel, having left them for security in the States, whither the deputation politely directed them to return for them forthwith; in simple fact, this host of impostors and empirics were a lot of fellows too lazy to work; and, from the high scale of medical remuneration, deeming it the easiest and most lucrative mode of employing their time, with the versatility characteristic of the American nation, where it is an every-day occurrence to see the blacksmith of yesterday transmuted on the morrow into the professor of some polite school of science or literature, they adopted the medical profession, "making the food they fed on," as they advanced in their practice, until, as in the Middle Creek diggings, things came to a crisis, and they were summarily expelled. On their disappearance, an old mountaineer stepped into the gap, whose simple remedies, administered without fee or reward, brought about very beneficial and salutary results, his doctrine being a regimen devoid as much as possible of salt, grease, or sugar, and moderate in quantity. He interdicted the use of tea or coffee, allowing in their stead a decoction of sassafras and the leaves of the spruce, or (as it is there called) the hemlock-tree, which made very palatable substitutes, and proved their sanitary efficacy in scurvy in every instance where they were regularly used.

It was on the 21st of December we recrossed the river, favoured with a fine day for our task; the weather in its change looking as if it took a deliberate turn, not a rapid transition, as on former occasions, a genial mildness pervading the shade as well as the sunshine, which was not of that glary character so little to be relied on, but of a mellow ruddy hue, producing comfort without inconvenience, tempering the air with a salubrious mildness, so that even the most enfeebled invalid could not complain the winds of heaven "visited him too roughly." The grass and herbage began to sprout and peer up from the soil under its vegetating influence, and by Christmas morning this state of atmosphere seemed so completely confirmed and established, we all gave way to the hope that the unusually early winter had passed away to give place to a very early spring.

I was truly delighted to find that the miners, without an exception, had come to the resolution of observing the great Christian festival, which was now close at hand, if not with a devotional reverence, at least by an abstinence from all labour on that day, which, from earliest childhood at home, we are taught to look forward to with a rapturous eagerness, and hail with a pious pleasure a pure, tranquil delight, that day so fraught with family hospitality, when benignity and brotherly love, so truly emblematic of it, pervade every breast; when feuds, jealousies, and misunderstandings fade and vanish before the sublimating spirit of kindliness and sanctification; that holy occasion, commemorative of the divine mission to earth, undertaken to establish unity of worship, and promote, by glorious example, "peace and good will amongst men."

Our joint mess, in accordance with the custom in the old country, had agreed upon the additional recognition, so generally in vogue there, of amending and enlarging our bill of fare to the full limits that our circumscribed markets would admit of; with which view we secured a loin of grizly bear meat, some six scattered bottles of wine, and two pounds of raisins, which, together with the contents of our own larder and cellar, furnished us such a dinner as dwellers in the mountains are rarely enabled to enjoy, each member of the mess undertaking that portion of the preparation he was best prepared to deal with; one agreeing to bake, another to roast the venison, another to boil the bacon, one gentleman taking in charge the manufacture of short and sweet bread, a second choosing for his department the pies, made from preserved apples; but Captain S——r's was the *chef-d'œuvre* of the feast, being a plum-pudding, made ship-shape, not to be excelled in composition, which he launched into a liquid so truly exquisite and congenial, as to leave one in doubt whether to prefer the pudding or the sauce. The part assigned me was to rig a table, and get the Sheffield ware in order, which I managed admirably by means of the front and end boards of the waggon, making shins of willow sticks, that squeeled and bent, not being far enough advanced in years to "groan" under the superincumbent profusion, a purified waggon-sheet serving the purposes of the cloth; and, if the cutlery was not all to match, it was matchless in its peculiar variety, a sufficiency being secured by supplying the carvers with bowie-knives, and short swords in lieu of their legitimate instruments.

Christmas morning was ushered in by a glorious sun, clear and lovely as a dawn in May, undisturbed by servile sounds or noises, a calm air of delicious repose and heavenly tranquillity pervading hill, dell, and dwelling, every one seeming to merge his mission in the memory of the regenerating era; the miners donned their holiday costume, interchanging visits before unusual, and divesting themselves of that turbulent demeanour that seemed their study to excel in; every tent was prepared with some little hospitable welcome, manufactured specially, and every estrangement was forgotten and forgiven; in fact, everything was in pleasing keeping with the day, and the soothed soul, soaring above all worldly cares and vanities, bathed in an exquisite devotional feeling, revelled in those pious impulses which, buried how deeply soever, have a place in the bosom of every Christian. I knew some on that day who led lives of indifference and impiety, long strangers to the duties of their creed, to sigh and pine for religious consolations, which they despised and neglected when quite within their reach, and retire into seclusion, to commune with their Creator in a spirit of devout sincerity before those sublime and eternal altars, the mighty mountains, that in themselves inculcated silent homilies of reverence and awe, and as impressive sermons on the omnipotence of God as ever issued from the carved and cushioned pulpit;

and oh! if all Christians who repine at their destinies, cavil at the dispensations of Providence, and trample on the divine injunctions of the Decalogue, were more frequently to contrast the life of self-denial, the perpetual mortifications, the cruel tortures, the bitter passion and death of the divine Being who assumed humanity on that day to vanquish death, and open up a path to Paradise for repentant sinners, with their own trivial or imaginary grievances, how many more penitential mourners would there not be seeking to hide and forget them, under remorse and contrition, imploring their Creator for that "peace of mind which surpasseth all understanding."

Our dinner-table was quite a spectacle in its way in the diggings, with its studied instrumental arrangements, its bear meat, venison, and bacon, its apple-pies pleasingly distributed, its Gothic columns of plain and fancy breads, interspersed at becoming intervals, and its Cardigans flanking the whole gastronomical array; the plum-pudding alone being reserved for second course, from motives of expedition and economy, as waiters were only to be had by express order from the cities. We had two guests, natives of the *ould* country, settlers in Oregon, who were about returning home, as gold mines, it was said, had been discovered on Rogue's River, which runs through their own territory, one of whom brought me, as a present, a noble dog that I often desired to possess, as their vigilance about a tent at night supersedes the trying necessity of keeping guard. I had at first some difficulty in keeping him, but by coaxing and kindness I conciliated him at length, and converted him into a most faithful and affectionate companion.

After a most cheerful and agreeable meal, we went and joined a full congregation of all the neighbours, smoking, not with perspiration, but with their pipes, seated on the felled firewood logs, enjoying the glorious afternoon, and chatting over times past, present, and to come. Before we separated it was arranged that one large party should go to Gold Creek, the stream of the battle-field; and another to Trinity River, about forty miles to the northward, discharging into the Pacific Ocean, from which quarter some golden news had lately found its way. Both of those parties having completed their preparations by the evening of St. Stephen's (the next) day, took their departure on the morning of the 27th. I was of the Gold Creek division, and being by this time so intimate with the trail, we made a quick march of it, though carrying packs to the full extent of our physical ability; but we were doomed to have our anticipative calculations concerning the season disagreeably confounded by the premonitory symptoms of an approaching change, which arrived, without much threatening, in a decided and angry mood. We erected rather comfortable quarters, having taken along tents, and went to work the morning after our arrival, under heavy sleet and rain, being desirous to get what we could from the creek (which had fallen low in the good weather) before it rose again. There was time sufficient to obtain full confirmation of our very extravagant expectations as to its richness, but the gold was in excessively fine particles, as we could not then penetrate to where we expected to find it in greater size. However, under all the disadvantages of weather, water, and short days, we took out a quantity that averaged three ounces to the man per day; but the creek soon raised so that we were, to use a sailor's phrase, obliged "to rest on our oars."

Up to this period we were unmolested by the Indians, owing, as we all ascribed it, to the presence of my fine dog; but our mutual gratulations on that score were ended a few nights afterwards on our all being aroused from our lairs by his violent barking, and the moment we lit our lamps to get the arms, which, from disuetude and damp, were not much to be relied on, a shower of arrows came through the canvas, wounding nine individuals slightly, and five more rather seriously; but we got rid of them without much trouble, for after a random discharge from the few guns that could be got to explode, we heard or felt no more of the savages for the night. Although unable to work, we hung on in expectation of outwaiting the bad weather, until our provisions began to get scant, and the incessant rain submerged all the low lands, driving us up to rising ground at a distance from the creek. At length, as there was no indication of improvement in the weather, and the new moon, according to the Indian tradition, was unpropitiously seated,* three of us set out for head-quarters, to get animals, if possible, to carry home four of the wounded men, who were yet in a crippled state, as, from experience of the job in poor Freeman's case, we knew the impossibility of doing so of ourselves, from the slushy state of the ground, and the swollen state of the brooks and streams, which also made it a very doubtful experiment with the animals; for even travelling without any packs, with only the materials for one meal, and our rifles, it gave us quite enough to do to pull through.

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* The Indians, when the new moon, in scollop shape, is placed level on its bottom, as a canoe should sit on the water, look for dry weather during its continuance, for in such a position a canoe would hold what water it might contain; but that just in proportion as it is cocked up on end it discharges rain—a primitive tradition which, though it may suit certain latitudes, is not to be relied on as a general index of barometrical accuracy.

By a very early start we calculated on reaching the river in one day, and did accomplish it a few hours after sunset, accompanied most attentively by a deluge of rain. We brought the men on the opposite bank to hail, by discharging our rifles, but they declined attempting the ferry until morning; so we had no shift but sit down supperless in the teaming torrents; and when morning came we found the river had risen far beyond any of its former limits, still rising and roaring with terrific import, the heavens sending down their liquid contents in actual streams, giving rise to a feeling of nervousness at the idea of crossing in a crank little canoe; but men supperless overnight, shaking in soaked clothes, and with extra stowage for breakfast, were satisfied to risk a little in getting to comfortable quarters. However, we were soon relieved from all anxiety about our personal safety, by the information that no one on the other side would undertake the hazard of ferrying us over.

Placed in this dilemma, there was no resource by which we could procure food but by killing a deer; so out we all sallied, and after a good deal of tiresome beating succeeded in wounding a large buck, but not so as to deprive him of the powers of locomotion. The consequence was, he led us a chase, in which we easily tracked him by his blood, until from hunger and fatigue we were compelled to desist, and labour back to the river bank—a much longer stretch than we had any notion of—where, far from any comfort or relief awaiting us, we were met by the surly thunders of a swelling torrent, fed and pampered by the deluge from above. Hunger, now overmastering all other sensations, gnawed with torturing importunity, until it produced an actual disinclination for sustenance, by the morbid anguish it caused in the realms of appetite, when lassitude supervened in shivering sleep—not so profound as to render us insensible of the pelting storm that pattered unpittingly over our miserable unsheltered beds; still it was after sunrise when we awoke from this horrible repose, so completely were all the physical energies numbed and prostrated; and although the rain had become perceptibly lighter, the river was as certainly higher, rushing, roaring, and boiling up with a maddened fury that shut out all hopes of a crossing for the day.

Famine and starvation now began to conjure up dreadful ideas of a wretched death, as, from weakness, we were incapable of going in quest of game; and even supposing we could retrace our steps to the camp we left, we knew that the slender stock of provisions which remained at our departure would have been entirely consumed, and that the probability was they were almost as ill off for food as ourselves—a conjecture which was confirmed in the course of the day by the arrival from thence of two more of our comrades, to urge the despatch of the supplies, as their store had become entirely exhausted. Our gaunt and altered appearance amazed and alarmed them; and as they had not yet become enervated by long fasting, they left us next morning to try the chances of the forest, first gathering some herbs and cresses, to endeavour to allay the pangs with which we were afflicted. The rain ceased soon after daybreak, and we spent the day in a state betwixt sleep and stupor, in an agony of suspense as to success of the hunters; but in the early afternoon, when we saw them coming down the hill-side without any game, we abandoned all hopes, as the river could not in the nature of things be practicable, ere exhausted nature should have sank into the repose of death.

I lay down on a gentle slope, from which I never expected to arise, breathing, as I imagined, my last prayers to the throne of Divine grace, my saddened memory at intervals carrying back my thoughts to my native land. Home, friends, and early associations, at times dreamily weaving themselves into groups and pictures of happiness and enjoyment, in which, for a moment, I would fancy myself participating—a gleam of delight flitting through my distempered imagination, too soon, alas! to be dispelled by the gloomy reality, the melancholy transition deepening my emotions of misery into a keen thrill of utter despair that would have been maddening, were they not sweetly soothed by the consoling hopes of Divine mercy and a glorious eternity. I prayed for sleep, to come and relieve me from the anguish of my physical pains and sufferings; but that fitful slumber, which was unable to subdue consciousness, would alone visit me.

While lying in this state on the morning of the fourth day, with my faithful dog at my feet, I overheard the men, who last joined us, discussing the necessity of killing him, as that, with proper economy, his flesh would sustain us until the river so far subsided as to render a passage practicable.

It added to my wretchedness, while revolving the expedient in my mind, that I was constrained to coincide in its policy; but as my comrades aroused me to communicate the suggestion, and extract my consent, I gazed upon my dumb friend with a tearful eye and sickened heart—the more so, as I fancied he looked wistfully in my face, standing in an attitude of dejection unusual to him, with drooped tail and hanging ears. I was unable to assent in words, but gave them silently to understand that I would interpose no obstacle; and no sooner had I done so, than poor "Sligo" (so I called him), instead of coiling himself beside me as was his wont, slunk away to some distance, sitting in a mournful attitude, and watching our movements with a grievous steadiness that perfectly unmanned me, impressing me with the steadfast conviction that his intuitive sagacity forewarned him of our cruel intentions.

It was clearly perceptible to all that his attachment and confidence were altered into fear and distrust, for no calling or coaxing would induce him to come nearer us; while, if any approached him, he receded slowly, but declined to run. S——, who was the steadiest shot, and had the best rifle, agreed to do the deed; and as he commenced loading, the poor brute betrayed increased uneasiness, moving and shifting restlessly as if about to run off; but finally sitting firmly still on a little mound, as if he came to the determination of yielding himself up as a victim for the salvation of his master, the warm tears trickled freely down my cheeks, and I felt a disposition to go and embrace him when looking at him for the last time. As S—— raised the rifle to his shoulder, the poor animal at the same moment fairly confronted his executioner, throwing back his ears with a low piteous whine, awaiting his doom like a hero.

Our first meal on poor Sligo was on his raw flesh, before the animal heat had cooled out, all evincing resolution enough to eat sparingly, supported, as I believe, by a natural repugnance to the diet; but next morning, when we succeeded in lighting a fire, we got on better with our fare in a broiled shape. Furthermore cheered by seeing from our marks that the flood was subsiding, and continued shrinking and calming down all day so rapidly, that we looked forward to get over in the morning; there was sufficient food till then, as the dog was large and fleshy, but we spent a night of nervous inquietude, lest the fickle elements should interpose betwixt us and rescue. However, a bright dawn opened upon us, disclosing to our delighted vision the river so fallen, as to divest the trip across of much of its terrors; and while we stood upon its brink, joyously and thankfully comparing our present with our late position, a crowd from the settlement came up along the opposite bank, cheering lustily to apprise us that relief was approaching, nor was it long till a gallant youth, named Anderson, was cleaving the stream in the canoe built by our mess, the smallest but most manageable of the fleet. He was quickly carried down several hundred yards; but as he reached the mid stream, a curling eddy swept the slight bark round with a velocity that appalled those on each bank, shooting her from its embrace into a current that carried her without an effort close in on our side, where we followed down to secure her when she touched. Having done so, a sonorous cheer filled the air, and shortly after two of the larger canoes with two paddles each emerged from the opposite shore, taking their departure much higher than the point from which Anderson started, thereby avoiding the current that hurried him down, and succeeding in making a tolerably direct landing. We hauled the little craft up by the bank, the three skiffs starting from the same place, and landing us safely, though with a large quantity of water taken in during the passage.

A fresh party recrossed before evening, carrying a supply of provision to the other sufferers, and a promise that if possible animals should be swam over the following day to bring home the wounded, which was punctually accomplished, and both men and baggage safely landed; the wounds, with one exception, proving trivial, and even that requiring only rest and attention to ensure a perfect cure.

CHAPTER XII.

Snow on the Trinity Mountains—The Party that went there Return—Their Sufferings—Their wretched Appearance—Confirmation of the Golden Character of the Trinity—Daily Averages—Superior Character of the Trinity Indians—Successful Experiments under adverse Circumstances—Trinity Diggers—Their extravagant Expectations—Coast Indians and their Squaws—They make Signs that Gold abounds towards the Coast—Bad Weather and short Provisions restrain the Men from going there—Price of Provisions at Trinity—Effect of the News at the Middle Creek Settlement—Our Mess and two others determine on going to the City of Sacramento—Motives for the Trip—My Feelings on the Subject—State of Society at the Settlement—Effects of the Season on it—Scenes of Grossness and Debauchery—Idleness the Parent of Mischief—I yearn for rational Companionship—My Accomplishments do not suit the prevalent Taste—Consequent irksomeness of my Position—The Taste for Blasphemy—Card-playing at the Mines—Skill of the Players—Consequences of the detestable System—Illustrative Anecdote—Hard Drinking increases—Digging Practices amongst the Miners—Characteristic Mode of observing the Sabbath.

It was quite clear, from the appearances of the Trinity Mountains, that the storm which had fallen on us, in a liquid shape, came down there in snow and hail, which left little doubt but that the party who went north must have also had their quota of suffering; nor were we astray in our surmises, for in seven days after our escape they came staggering into camp, in a state of exhaustion and emaciation, that rendered their recognition dubious at a first glance, and even their survival a matter of uncertainty. Hunger, too, had seized on them with its penetrating fangs; intense cold and exposure had frequently almost arrested the current of life, and the compulsory toils of daily attempts at progress had worn down their strength to a mere thread. They set out with seven animals, but returned without one, six having given out and died for want of sustenance; the seventh, a sort of pet, that would take a crust from the hand, and lie beside the camp-fire like a dog, it was, that saved their lives, the story of whose sacrifice formed a curious coincidence with the sorrowful fate of poor Sligo. Our greatest care only produced slight advances towards recovery, for their appetites appeared to be annihilated beyond the reach of stimulants, and their legs were prodigiously swollen, contracted, and lacerated, from the constant breaking through the ice-crust over which they travelled.

But they brought back great tidings of the richness of the Trinity diggings, particularly of a new location, some thirty miles down the river, where the few who were encamped admitted that, before the bad weather set in, it was no unfrequent achievement to take out from one to three pounds of gold each daily, but access with animals was the next thing to impracticable. The Indians there are of another tribe and nature from those along the Sacramento: majestic in person, chivalrous in bearing, incapable of treachery, but ready to fight to the death in avenging an insult or injury. They are active and energetic in the extreme, hunting down game, with which the country abounds, for their food, which also supplies them with raiment; and endowed with a germ of enterprise or ambition, which instigates them to work, in order to become possessed of a flannel shirt or a blanket.

Our men did not receive as gospel truths the apparently marvellous tales about the extraordinary mineral wealth of those regions, which, according to the received accounts, would place them so far ahead of all the discovered mines, but commenced testing them by personal experiment, in as far as the state of the weather and the waters would admit. As it was impossible to try the bars that had been already operated on, the banks of the river, where the diggings were usually carried on, being totally submerged, there was no field, but the more elevated grounds, where the old Trinity hands scorned to expend their time and labour—spoiled children of fortune as they were—rather contented to grant themselves a vacation until the rich golden depôts became again accessible, than toil for what in other diggings would be estimated as a right reasonable remuneration. Our party working and washing the despised soil, under many disadvantages, averaged daily about fifteen dollars each, taking out from twelve to twenty dollars daily to the hand, which, it must be admitted, was "confirmation strong" of the wonderful fertility (if I may use the phrase) of the region, judging by analogy of greater productiveness of the more favoured locations.

The day before our party set out on their return they received further and more enticing proof of the pre-eminence of Trinity treasures, by the arrival of a band of noble-looking Indians from the direction of the coast, their first visit among the whites, accompanied by a few squaws, who, strange to say, in this latitude are ugly, ill-favoured, stunted in stature, lumpy in figure, and awkward in gait; the men, on the other hand, as I have already described them, being singularly endowed with all the opposite personal advantages. They had not anything to trade; but, from their watchful attention to all the movements, it was evident their object was to ascertain the motives that led to an invasion of their hunting-ground. However, as soon as they found out what the pale faces wanted, by observing the result of their operations, they broke out into a simultaneous laugh, shaking their heads derisively, at the same time pointing down the river, and making signs that the gold was more plentiful and more easily procured there, exhibiting a few golden-barbed arrows in proof of their statement. Our folk were half-inclined to venture down, but the weather was so dreadful, and their stock of provisions at such a very low ebb, they chose rather to endeavour to reach home with the welcome tidings.

The price of flour at the small settlement, when they left, was five dollars per pound; pork, four dollars; beans, three dollars; coffee was cheap, being over-abundant, and sugar nominal, as nine-tenths of the miners dispensed with its use; but spirits of any kind attained the monstrous figure of sixteen dollars per pint. Oh! for a few puncheons of Cambeltown or Islay whisky there, and a fig or a snap of the fingers for the diggings.

The news, as might be expected, at once decided the inhabitants of the migratory city of Middle Creek, on taking wing to the El Dorado as soon as the state of the weather and country would admit of a passage; but as that should necessarily be some weeks in coming round, our mess and two others conceived they would be employing the intervening time profitably and pleasantly in going down to Sacramento City, as the late arrival of some lightly-laden waggons proved the attempt was practicable. They were naturally anxious to get some news from home, and, together with enjoying the comparative luxuries of city fare, and taking a fling through its gaieties and amusements, they laid out their accounts to supply themselves for the ensuing campaign with many trivial but useful necessaries, that traders above never thought of providing, which past experience had convinced them subtracted materially from their comfort and general health.

It was my intention, had not the expedition been organised, to have started alone with a pack-mule, for I had fully accomplished the objects of my mission to the mines, and began to get heartily sick of the society at the settlement. In the early season, when the state of the weather never interrupted the employment, and the people were regularly occupied at work throughout the day, retiring to rest at rational hours to repose from fatigue, matters went on orderly, and the time, though dull and monotonous, passed smoothly enough, without resorting to any of those expedients for cheating and consuming the tedious hours of idleness which society, in all its grades, has ordained with ingenious if not laudable adaptability; but since the rainy season set in, and the community were confined to quarters, the system of dividing the day was no longer practicable, and the yawning miner, in the great majority of cases, devoid of any mental resources, embraced the indulgences of degrading appetites and propensities as a cure for ennui, stimulating the dullness of unenlightened rumination with intoxicating drink, and ministering to the cravings of the lust for acquisition and excitement by gaming in its most odious guise, giving rise to unintermitting scenes of disgusting debauchery, that partook in their grossness of the reckless character of the class who flocked to snatch up fortunes, where there were no curbs or restraints to check the natural bent of their dispositions. The seed once sown in so congenial a soil, shot up with luxuriant rapidity, the prolonged period of idleness affording ample time for the full maturation of its odious and contaminating fruit.

Matters thus daily deepened in repulsiveness, until even my own mess became imbued with the vicious contagion, when I fairly lost all heart, and yearned piningly for the pleasures of rational companionship, and an interchange of those educational acquirements and accomplishments, which, after all, constitute the great charm of intercourse in life. I could not suit my narratives and small talk to the prevalent tone or taste, nor yet "lend my ears" as a good listener to the current conversation, or take part in the favourite games in vogue amongst them, in consequence of which my position became uncomfortably irksome; for without arrogating to myself any unusual degree of morality, I may be permitted to say, I stood out in a prominent contrast there that did not contribute to the personal pleasantness of my situation, however self-consoling it might have been to my mind and conscience; and although I do not pretend to say I was myself above reproof at any period of my mortal pilgrimage, I had not sunk to so low a depth as to relish society when it discoursed in a series of oaths and imprecations of the most impious character, in which the rarest flowers, the choicest gems, of ribaldry and blasphemy, were scattered about with a spendthrift profusion that would puzzle the "recording angel" to keep pace with; where no man's story was worth listening to that was not linked together with infernal curses; where nothing could occur, either of a pleasing or disagreeable nature, that would not elicit an ebullition of diabolical swearing; where the man was cock-of-the-walk who could devote himself most fluently to damnation, calling down the direst imprecation on his own head, or concoct and narrate the most abominable story with the most obscene effect, originating an infamous rivalry for this disgusting pre-eminence, in which even men, advanced in years, whose very presence should restrain such odious displays, contested the palm of depravity with an ardour and accomplishment that was positively appalling.

Neither was I free from a penchant for the recreation arising out of games of skill or science; but it did not follow from this that I should become fascinated with the sinister attractions of card-playing, conducted in accordance with all the most modern and inscrutable devices of legging and cozening; for the miners never thought of sitting down to dawdle over an honest game to pass the evening; they would not give a cheese-paring for the dull, stupid monotony of fair play; the excitement of cheating, in card stealing, card dropping, packing the deal, or defrauding the pool, constituted, according to their standard, the main interest of the amusement; merit never was awarded to mere skill in play; but when a fellow won by a gross fraud, a shout of approbation complimented his knavery in some such terms as "D——n it," or "G—d A——y d——n it! any dunce can win with good cards—the clever fellow alone by quickness and dexterity;" and so thoroughly were they indoctrinated with this maxim, and practised in its use, that I verily believe a disciple might have been picked from this clumsy crowd, who it would puzzle the most accomplished kid-gloved Greek in any of the fashionable clubs of Paris or London to get to windward of. As a necessary consequence, serious rows and bloody encounters sprung out of those debasing scenes. On one occasion, at the national game of "Poker," I observed a player slyly dropping kings into his lap, as opportunity offered, until he assembled all the male portion of the royal family in a cluster, and then with the full confidence of an all but an invincible hand, he substituted ounces for dollars, bragging a half-dozen to begin with, an opposite competitor covering the amount, and advancing an extra half-dozen, on which the other further improved, doubling the sum (both at this juncture placing large buckskin purses of dust on the table), but being met by a similar advance, he began to "smell a rat," and "called him," when, to his utter mortification and discomfiture, four aces were displayed to his astonished gaze; but while his opponent was enjoying the applause of his superior sleight-o'-hand, the patron of royalty snatched his gold from the bench, exclaiming, in virtuous indignation, "Cheating!" "Villainy!" &c., which originated a right royal row of the regular "rough and tumble" sort, "knives, biting, scrooging, and goughing all in," that eventuated in wounds and gashes, the more miraculous that they were not mortal.

And while to wind up, I honestly plead guilty to a respect and partiality for a well-edited tumbler of "whisky negus" at the proper season of the day. The spell was broken when I saw it swallowed at all hours; and, instead of contributing its coruscant influences to convivial intercourse, balefully ministering to the fiercest and most turbulent passions.

The diggings also furnished a field for a kindred species of adroitness; for when miners found their "lead giving out," they devised some feasible pretext for selling out, extolling their "claim" to the skies, and religiously swearing to the Johnny Raws, who are always to be found, that it yielded a most marvellous average; and as the expectant purchaser approached to inspect the location, the man rocking would unobservedly empty his purse upon the screen, so that when the washer came to be inspected, the quantity it appeared honestly to contain, quickly brought about a bargain at the outside terms demanded, leaving the dupe to be laughed at, and the "downy cove" to be patted on the back, as a paragon worthy to be held up for imitation; and what tickled my fancy exceedingly, was to see the class of Christians I have been describing abstaining from work of a Sunday, which they invariably did, avowing their scruples of conscience about labouring on the Sabbath, while canvassing for a party to sit down to cheat, swear, and drink over a game of "Poker," or listen to the filthy homilies of some hoary debauchee, who gloried the more in his audacious impiety because it was the Lord's-day. The only exception to those scenes on a day of rest was the one I have already recorded, the Nativity of our Saviour, which I can only account for by the supposition, that their time was employed in the feasting preparations I have described in a previous chapter.

I am now done with the mines and miners, having visited all the diggings of note or celebrity on the Sacramento, or its various tributaries, and carried away specimens of minerals and manners from most of them; but, as I have more than once before repeated, I only regard the operations I witnessed as the mere picking up of the crumbs from the rich man's table—the rich remains of the costly and substantial repast being only approachable by the union of science and capital. I shall not weary the reader any further with my own crude speculations on the origin, distribution, and extent of those precious deposits, but beg to refer him to the report of the Honourable Thomas Butler King on the subject, which was read before and approved of by the United States' Congress, as I have no doubt it will prove both interesting and satisfactory.

CHAPTER XIII.

Prepare for a Start—The Picturesque—Fair Roads and Fordable Creeks—Stop at Clear Creek—The Contrast betwixt Autumn and Spring—The Crossing of the Creek—Providential Interference of some Packmen—Practices of Californian Travellers—The Mode of Rearing Youngsters in Missouri—Cotton-wood Creek and Plains in their new Garb—Distressing Accident—Recover some of the Property—But poor Eiffe's Gold is wanting—His Affecting Story—His Youthful Enterprise—His Successful Industry—His Calamity, Resignation, and Spirit—Vegetation improves as we go Southward—Mr. Hudspeth's Rancho—Its Favoured Position—His English Housekeeper—Her Salary—Her Perquisites—Compared with old Country Wages—No Field or Garden Cultivation—Remarks on the Subject—The Pretensions of California to be classed as an Agricultural Country—Opinions of Practical Men—Early Emigrants deceived by Mis-statements—Advantages of Mr. Hudspeth's Location—Description of the Road Downwards—Our Supply of Milk—Magnificent Prairie—Covered with Game—The great size Elk Attain—Expert Nigger Butcher—Comparison between Negro and Indian Capabilities—The Niggers in the Mines—Their Conduct there at Variance with their Behaviour in the States—A few loose Reflections on Slavery.

Now, my good reader, I am again ready for the road, having disburdened my mind of the reflections and observations contained in the last chapter, and in a more lightsome mood to point out all "places of kuriositee," as poor Power used to sing in the "White Horse of the Peppers." It was on the 23rd of February we got into motion with our waggon of six-ox power, accompanied by two others of like capabilities—a more lovely morning never shone from the heavens, calm and clear, the white mountain tops glistening in the sun, while from the valleys a dense fog arose, lazily rolling up their sides in elongated volumes, shutting out the landscape over which they passed, and occasionally illuminated for a moment with a most strange and picturesque effect, as a slanting ray of light issuing through a ravine penetrated their sombre folds; the earth showed signs of active vegetation, and sounds of gladsome glee were warbled in the grove as we went along, more chirping than melodious, I must admit; for the feathered choristers throughout all the districts of California I visited, seem sadly devoid of natural musical taste or talent. We whistled merrily, too, finding the ground in fair travellable order, and the creeks not over deep or rapid, stopping at Clear Creek, as the next stage would protract our day's journey too much. It was near where we pitched our tents as we came up, but its present surface, clothed in a mantle of rich, thick, succulent herbage, beautiful in its garniture of emerald green, exhibited a marked contrast to its brown, withered, and unwelcome aspect in the fall.

The creek was much swollen, and the going out so steep, we saw there was a job in prospect for the morning; and, sure enough, in the crossing, just as we reached the critical point, the near-side led-steer funked the passage, and turning round suddenly, took the middle yoke off their legs, involving the whole team in a mass of confusion, the waggon, partially afloat, bumping and drifting as the current surged around it; nor do I think we could have escaped without an upset in the stream, or the loss of most of our oxen, only that some packmen, passing at the moment, rode in at great risk, and whipped the refractory leaders into line, continuing at their sides until they made a landing. Another of the waggons also got into difficulty, nearly involving the untimely end of a fine young lad named Eiffe, the driver, who jumped into the stream to set matters to rights, when he was immediately swept away, and not being a swimmer, would have inevitably perished had not one of the same party, who kindly relieved us, dashed down after him and dragged him ashore. Beyond the sousing, he was not a whit the worse; for, throwing off his wet clothes into the waggon, he was as fresh as ever in a few moments. In California, it is an invariable practice of travellers—like the coaches in the olden time—to pull up at meeting and exchange their news, and as we felt under so many obligations to the packmen, we gladly and minutely gave them all the information they sought respecting the mines; the principal querist asking me as a wind-up, "If there was much sickness in the diggings?" to which I replied "Yes;" commencing my enumeration of the ailments with "fever and ague," when he stopped me with the exclamation, "Oh! if that is all, it's o' no account, we Missourians are raised on them," uttering it, in as cool and literal a tone, as if they really constituted a main portion of his infantile pabulum.

As we approached Cotton Wood we could scarcely recognise the face of the fine plains, decked in their luxuriant garb of clover, grass, wild oats, and barley, of which the oxen snatched mouthfuls as they trudged along; having been forewarned by the packmen that the creek would present rather a formidable obstacle to our progress, we drove on briskly to reach it early, resolved to attempt the crossing before night; the more especially, as the skies lowered, as if a change was about to take place before morning. Although we led the van at Clear Creek, the conduct of our led yoke there absolved us from that position on the present occasion, giving way to Eiffe, whose pluck, far from being cooled, appeared to have been fresh braced by the late ducking. A stiffish breeze having sprung up, he stripped off the waggon-cover, which created a considerable wind-draught, and then got astride the near led steer, stationing a comrade in front of the waggon with a whip to urge those in the tongue and centre, making a straight and excellent shoot across to a low gravelly bar, where all difficulties would have terminated; but from some cause we could not discover, or Eiffe subsequently explain, the whole team turned right down with the flood, and, getting off the ridge of the ford, were all soon beyond their depth. In their struggles, the oxen got disengaged somehow or other from the waggon, and as Eiffe stuck to the steer on which he was mounted, he got safely to shore; but his comrades getting to the same side to jump out, upset the waggon, emptying all the contents into the creek, the cover having been unluckily removed. The boys got ashore after a sharp struggle, and while I was congratulating them on their escape, a stifled but piteous sobbing caught my ear, when looking round, I saw poor Eiffe shedding tears abundantly. I sought to console him by the assurance that everything of consequence would be recovered, as trunks would float, and even bags containing clothes would be carried ashore in some of the eddies; while, as regarded the provisions, we had enough for both messes, besides which, two days' more would bring us to Hudspeth's rancho, where abundance could be obtained. But my consolations conveyed no comfort; in fact in his abstraction I believe he never heard them, for heaving a sad sigh, he mournfully said, "I care not for myself, it is my dear mother and sisters I grieve for." I repeated my assurance that the trunks would be got, thinking it was their loss he bewailed, as most probably they contained his all. "I know," he said, "the trunks will be found, but my belt with all my gold in it is at the bottom and will never float or be found." The poor fellow, when he got wet before in Clear Creek, stripped off everything, even the filleted leather belt, in which miners generally sew up their gold, and threw all loosely into the bottom of the waggon, where they remained until the unfortunate accident. The waggon came to shore on a point about half a mile down, the loose cloths nearer hand, and the three trunks in some willows at a bend below the waggon, but the flour and pork sunk, and the belt, containing 1800 dollars, was nowhere to be found.

I don't remember ever experiencing a more poignant sensation of sorrow and commiseration than while listening to the youthful sufferer, narrating his own story at the camp-fire that night. He ceased weeping, but there was an air of sadness and patient resignation in his manner, and a melancholy cadence in his voice much more affecting than the more violent demonstrations of grief. His family resided in the northern part of Indiana, on a pleasant profitable farm, on which his father raised 1000 dollars by mortgage, to enable him to build a new house, and convert the original log erections into stables, but died soon after (fifteen months previous to the accident), leaving the boy, seventeen years of age, the oldest of the family, to struggle for the support of his mother and six sisters. The idea of the mortgage, bearing a high rate of interest, terrified the boy, but he took heart on hearing of the golden valleys of California, resolving to reap one harvest there, while, by extraordinary exertions, he put in an early spring crop on his farm at home, sufficient to meet the wants of the family, and a gale's interest on the mortgage; and then, under his mother's sanction, hired himself to a wealthy neighbour about starting for that country, undertaking to drive the team for his mere support on the road. They had rather a successful journey, and poor Eiffe reached our encampment by a similar engagement to a party of miners coming up to northern mines. It was late in the fall when he got to work, but he was industrious, and, stimulated by a son and a brother's love and affection, he laboured late and early, on wet days and cold days, to try and return, lest the unfeeling mortgagee should harass or impose on his mother in his absence. With what a proud and happy spirit he started homeward on the morning of the 23rd of February, shortening (as he described it) at every step the distance that intervened betwixt him and his beloved mother and sisters, carrying along with him more than the amount he required to release them from debt and anxiety.

He often felt the unfortunate belt to assure himself it was no cheat of imagination; but there were the well-packed fillets that were to carry competence and happiness to his dear home. His ambition was satisfied, and he never again intended travelling beyond the precincts of his farm, save with its produce to the nearest market; whiling away the tedium of the journey revolving projects in his mind calculated to add to the comforts and enjoyments of those he loved so tenderly; two months more and he would have been in the midst of them, standing erect on his own hearth in all the innocent pride of independence, a free man, absolved from debt, with health, energy, and hopefulness to fight the battle of life; but the chalice of happiness was dashed from his lips; he was again a man of straw; he trusted, however, a benignant Providence would watch over and protect the widow and the orphans, while he returned to the mines and dug out 1800 dollars more.

It was a pitiful tale, and I never so wished for riches as at the moment he concluded, that I might place within his hand an equivalent for his loss, and speed him on his filial and holy mission. He seemed relieved by the telling of his painful story; and next morning his stoical composure, nay, cheerful resignation, quite surprised me in so young a lad, for it is rarely indeed that the sanguine and impatient temperament of youth can calmly and uncomplainingly brook a disappointment of so harrowing a nature. All that remained to refit himself again for the diggings—and it was barely sufficient—was his share in the team and waggon. He came with us as far as Hudspeth's rancho, where he sold out to his companions; and having laid in his supplies, took his leave of us in a spirit of gaiety and self-reliance that showed a nobility of nature rarely to be met with, returning without a murmur to the scene of his late labours, and giving me a letter to post when I reached the States, containing, I suppose, an account of his misfortune. I sincerely trust that God has prospered him, and that he is now in a happy home enjoying the fruits of his sterling industry.

As we proceeded downwards the vegetation was more forward, and the fine plains, which now began expanding to a great width, were thickly stocked with herds of wild cattle, interspersed with great quantities of elk and deer, all driven down into the plains by the snow on the mountains. One of our men shot an elk, and for the first time I tasted the flesh of that animal: it is coarse-grained and dark, and as I surveyed my steak before tasting it, looked like a tough morsel, but much to my surprise, I found it tender and well-flavoured.

On the evening of the 27th we reached Mr. Hudspeth's rancho, situated most admirably on a highly fertile plain, sufficiently elevated to escape inundation from any but extreme floods, and favourably placed with regard to water, having the Sacramento as its eastern boundary, and Stoney Creek traversing its southern extremity all the way to the coast range, to which the prairie here uninterruptedly extends, leaving the cattle an immense range. The whole extent, as far as the eye could survey it, was absolutely waving in the gentle wind the wild oats, and indigenous grasses springing up with extraordinary luxuriance, thickly commingled with clover and wild vetches; and, as might be expected, all the cattle and horses were in the finest possible condition. His house was on a large scale, for the country built of logs, calculated for the accommodation of miners who usually made a halt there, the housekeeping being conducted by an English girl who fled in a passing train from the Salt Lake City—an admirable cook—and made the nicest butter I ever used, for which services she was requited by the liberal salary of 1000 dollars per year, and the right to dispose of, as her proper perquisites, all the milk, butter, cheese, and eggs that remained after supplying the wants of the household.

Those she admitted to me: according to the amount they then realised weekly, would increase her yearly income to 2500 dollars, which on explanation did not surprise me, as she obtained twenty-five cents a piece for eggs, which sometimes got so high as fifty; one dollar per quart for milk, four dollars for butter, and I forget how much for cheese; then the overplus of each must have been immense, from the legions of hens about the premises and the incredible number of calves I saw in the corrall, while the constantly passing waggons, pack-companies, and whale-boats, never suffered a stock to accumulate or spoil in her hands. Only think of £500 a year, ye cooks and dairy-maids of old England, and leave off your pert and saucy airs. Let us hear no more emulous boasting amongst the West-End Clubites about the princely salaries they give their foreign artists, while an humble girl in a log-hut in the wilds of a new country, receives close on the amount that would qualify a country squire to represent his native county in the Imperial Parliament.

It was here I got my first drink of milk since I left Salt Lake, and, oh, what a glorious treat it was, one I would not have exchanged for the choicest productions of French or Rhenish vineyards, and it was healthful as well as agreeable, for after a three days' sojourn we all sensibly felt altered, and improved habits of body. Our elk meat was now disregarded in our love for fresh butter and eggs, which we consumed in quantity, even at the rural rate of 25 cents per egg; but there were no vegetables or cultivation of any sort, nor was there even a garden attached to premises, nor to any of those we passed in our up journey, while as to field cultivation such a project was deemed to be so entirely preposterous that it was never attempted, except in some of those more favoured spots, which are so few and circumscribed in extent that any crop which could be raised on them could scarcely be taken into account in the supplies of the country.* Many people emigrated to California, intending to confine themselves entirely to agricultural pursuits, but even in the limited tracts along the valleys of the Sacramento and the San Joaquim, where wheat, corn, and potatoes might be raised, with the aid of irrigation, the great expense of making and keeping fences in repair, and the enormous price of labour, forbid all hopes of making it a profitable speculation as a general thing; while those articles, raw and manufactured, can be imported at the rates they are from the States, Chili, Oregon, the Sandwich Islands, and the Australian colonies, some few that have been lucky enough to secure small scopes of good land in convenient situations, have been well paid by raising potatoes and garden vegetables; but if the country were dependent on those meagre supplies, with its rapidly increasing population, we would not only hear of a scarcity of esculents, but of a prevalence of scurvy.

When treating of the pretensions of California to be classed amongst agricultural countries, it should be known that the rainy season there prevails over the period at which fall-sowings might be put in, and early spring preparations should be made, when the earth, so far from being in a state fit for the plough, could not be trod over by cattle; the general sowing, then, of necessity, must always be late, and the parching season arriving before the crop is half ripe, it withers and dies, in a state of forward semi-maturation. The only crop that can be depended on is the hay-crop, but beyond what the ranchero wants for his own use, it is valueless, save in the vicinity of the few cities and villages scattered over the country: those are not merely my own notions and ideas, but the opinions of practical men long settled in the country, who tried and failed in the experiment; in point of fact, if it were feasible, there would now be large tracts in tillage, as from the numbers of Americans there who were bred and brought up to farming, many of them would be following the plough. But California is essentially a grazing country —which it must remain, and I know none other that can excel it as such; though we were sometime since accustomed to hear it cried up as "the finest country for agriculture on the face of the globe," and to see this and such like assertions circulated by the American press, the political and private purposes it was sought to promote by the propagation of such a belief having been superseded by the discovery of the gold mines, we cease latterly to have those resources so diligently puffed and relied on—not, however, before numerous families thus fooled emigrated from the States and Oregon; most of whom, finding out the imposition, returned to the latter country. The few who remained accommodating themselves to the circumstances, turned their attention to stock raising, which, from subsequent events, has become a highly lucrative occupation.

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* Colonel Fremont grounds his argument in support of the agricultural capabilities of California on the products of the Missions; but to show how difficult it was even to select sites for the few establishments of that sort in the country, I will quote an article from the laws regarding their foundation:—"Art. 7. The place where a mission settlement is to be made, ought to be selected, *if possible*, where there will be sufficient water to drink, and for the irrigation of the fields."

The rancho of Mr. Hudspeth over and above the natural advantages I have before referred to, is situated, I may say, at the head of the deep-water navigation of the Sacramento, which, immediately above it, forks and shoals, and, thence upwards, gets concentrated at several points into rapids, which must for ever, I conceive, forbid the idea of trading with large craft; and, most probably from this circumstance and its position with regard to the northermost mines, it will soon become the site of a new city. Miners, travelling thus far by water, being constrained to use animals for the remainder of the journey, purchase all Mr. Hudspeth can supply, paying whatever price the tender conscience or caprice of that gentleman may choose to affix; in addition to which he has, also, a ready market for fat beeves, at the adjacent mines, and derives a large income by grazing the cattle, that companies so soon as they arrive at their destinations, send there to recruit; so that to use a common phrase, "putting this and that together," I think Mr. Hudspeth is likely to skim the cream of the diggings.

It was about thirty miles higher up, on the opposite side, where we experienced such extreme difficulty and danger in crossing the Sacramento in the fall on our up journey, so that the country downwards is yet untrodden ground for the reader, who will therefore be kind enough to bear with me in calling his attention to the various objects of interest on the route. The morning we left was clear and cool, the temperature, contrary to what might be looked for, becoming more and more so as we proceeded southwards, our trail lying close by the river edge, through a fringe of timber, which in the more advanced season must afford a fine umbrageous avenue to the jaded traveller, continuing as it does, with scarcely a break throughout the entire journey, following all the sinuosities of the river, and consequently lengthening the road. In the spring and fall this is unavoidable from the soft state of the prairie, while along the course of the river there is an elevated ridge of ground extending the width of the grove above the influence of the floods, which furnishes a dry and firm road during the summer months. However, case-hardened travellers, for whom the blistering orb has no terrors, have the option of choosing the diameter instead of the semi-circumference of those elongating bends.

Maugre the cost, we filled every canteen, bottle, flask, and vial we had with new milk—that sweet natural nectar so far before all the drugged and fermented distillations of human invention when you obtain it in its virgin purity; and as our pretty Hebe poured the genuine lacteal stream from her well-scoured pail, I thought of the sky-blue parodies of London concoction, and the civic dialogue, "You put dirty water in the milk this morning, you hussy, you." "No, indeed marm, it was clear from the well." We estimated our day's progress at eighteen miles as we pulled up in the evening, after having skirted along a splendid prairie all day, even excelling that we had previously gone over in its luxuriant verdure, forming quite a downy couch beneath our blankets, and saving us our usual mornings' task of hunting up the scattered cattle, who filled themselves to repletion on the spot, and lay down beside the waggons. There were innumerable herds of wild cattle and elk scattered over the rich natural pasture, grazing in quiet communion like the tame flocks of the settler. The plains here began to widen out considerably, the coast range taking the shape of the segment of a circle, while the surface of the land was as level as a lake, but totally devoid of water-courses for a great distance, exhibiting a smooth and settled aspect as if it retained its primeval formation unwrinkled, undisturbed by any of those angry convulsions that distorted the face of the country on the east side of the river, causing it to appear that the stream interposed between it, and the volcanic parturitions of the Sierra Nevada a singularity of feature that extends to the coast mountains, whose rounded outline form a striking contrast to the jagged and pointed peaks of the inland range.

Although we had soft beds, it was impossible to sleep in the early part of the night from the packs of coyotes that surrounded us, serenading us with an uninterrupted chorus of shrill, discordant barking, that would have overpowered the virtues of the most powerful narcotic. Being up by times in the morning from this annoyance, I got an opportunity of shooting a large buck, with which we displaced our elk meat that was getting a little the "worse of the wear," emitting a racy odour, that I believe brought the wolves to our door the preceding night. Some of those elk arrive at an uncommon size, much beyond what I imagined they ever attained. I saw one shot the same morning by a party, whose night-quarters were a few miles below us, that was fully as large as an average sized mule, and I could not help admiring the flippant dexterity and neatness with which a nigger belonging to the "crowd" denuded him of his hide, and disembogued the entrails, separating, with all the skill of a regular practitioner, the lard, fat, heart, and liver, which were retained for use; but as I remarked during my limited experience in the States, they are handy and expert at whatever they try or give attention to, whether as servants as tradesmen, making, as we all know, famous cooks, nonpareil barbers, excellent sailors, capital blacksmiths (puns apart), carpenters, and tailors, at each of which trades I saw them at work—in short, attaining and *retaining* a respectable mediocrity in whatever business or calling they are apprenticed to. Standing on a towering eminence above the Indian, who is incapable of acquiring any art or handicraft that involves the slightest exercise of mind or judgment, and even if he does arrive at any moderate degree of skill by laborious teaching, he relapses into his original ignorance and indolence whenever he is placed in an independent position—as the story is told, taxing the soil to reproduce what he was accustomed to make in the workshop. The most that can be made of him, with an infinity of pains, is the primitive occupation of a herder of stock; yet place the head of an Indian beside that of a Negro, and compare and contrast the fine, intellectual-looking features and phrenological developments of the one with the low, animal cast and construction of the other, and how totally irreconcileable will not the result be with the plausible doctrines of Lavater or the ingenious theories of Spurzheim.

While on the subject I will take the opportunity of remarking a strange circumstance relating to the Negro slaves in California, who are said to be so sensibly impatient under the yoke at home, always on the look-out for a slip to escape over the border, or by sheer thrift striving to acquire a sum sufficient to purchase their freedom, and whose emancipation is now the great political question of the States. Yet not one, in any instance that I could ascertain after the most minute inquiries, deserted in the mines; where they were in great numbers, without any law to restrain them, and therefore no punishment to overtake them, the road wide open, without obstacle, or any sort of espionage, which would have been equally absurd and ineffectual, and equal opportunities with their owners of aggrandisement within their reach.

It formed a riddle I never could read so as to convince myself, or get others to solve satisfactorily. There appears only one of two modes of accounting or explaining it. The first, want of moral courage to risk a separation, where disease was so prevalent, medical attendance so difficult to procure, life so precarious, and remuneration of labour, according to their views and fears, so problematical in good health, and so certain to be absorbed by the continuation of any disabling ailment; the second, the sincerity of their attachment to their masters, and real indifference to their state, notwithstanding the thunders of the press, the magniloquence of stump orators, the moans of superannuated vestals, and the pulpit denunciations of philanthropic divines, who have kept anathematising the slaveholder and encouraging the negro, until those sable gentry in the free States have become so inflated with the ideas of their importance, that they have actually nominated the Honourable Mr. Seward as their candidate for the next presidency, and a man of colour for his vice; some of their orators predicting that the day is close at hand when the rice swamps of Carolina, the tobacco fields of Virginia, and the cotton plantations of Alabama, will not only change the colour of their masters, but the colour of their slaves.

I do not pretend to be a profound observer; still it would appear to me that on the slavery question hinges the continuance and integrity of the great federal union, the prosperity of all the southern, and, collaterally, that of the north-eastern or manufacturing states. For it is admitted, because it cannot be denied, that the products of that section of the union can only be cultivated and secured by the labours of the coloured race; and we have before our eyes the recent experiment of Great Britain trying graduated manumission in the West Indian colonies, at the enormous cost of twenty millions stirling, which resulted in the surcease of all cultivation, and the utter annihilation of the value of property in those islands, from which it is not unreasonable to presume that like effects would be entailed by like causes in America; and should it turn out so, and that cotton, tobacco, sugar, molasses, rice, and coffee, came to be subtracted from the exports of that country, her much boasted commerce would soon dwindle down into paltry and miserable insignificance, and the flourishing, healthy condition of the New England manufacturing section of the union become afflicted with premature decay and atrophy.

And while such important consequences are at stake, there does not appear to be a scintilla of pure philanthropy in the motives of the abolitionists, whose violent agitation seems to me rather the fermentation of wounded, overweening pride, making an effort to shake off a reproach which the older and more civilised nations of Europe are perpetually throwing in their teeth; for with all their cant and whine about the pitiable moral condition of the Negro, together with their favourite democratic doctrine of "perfect equality and toleration," they themselves do not hesitate placing the ban upon the manumitted darkies, shunning and avoiding all intercourse with them, as if they were an infected race, manifesting an amount of insulting scrupulosity that creates a moral thraldom, infinitely less bearable, to an independant man, than actual slavery to a captured Negro. I recollect, in travelling from Lancaster to Buffalo (the free region), I got into a railway carriage that was crowded to a crush in every corner, with the exception of a long seat, at the end of which sat a respectable-looking man of colour, beside whom I took my place, to the great astonishment of my fellow-passengers, which ripened into impertinent sneers and audible whispers of contempt, when I entered into conversation with this free citizen—conduct, I maintain, that is wholly incompatible and inconsistent with a sincere advocacy of the great moot question; first labouring to elevate a raw people to their own level, and then studying to convince them they are in a false position, producing, what struck me, as a remarkable contrast betwixt the free Negro and the slave, that was altogether in favour of the latter; the one having attained the acme of social privileges is suddenly left to look after his own interests and concerns, and corroding with rancour at not being received with brotherly equality by his white brethren, becomes a disappointed, discontented, vicious member of society; the other having all his wants supplied, without cares to vex him, and no goading ambition to torture his mind, goes through life on the broad grin, full of fun and merriment, working with a smile, and enjoying the occasional indulgence accorded to him with a gleeful relish. This contrast I found in New York and Missouri, in which latter state, if a laughing eye and a joyous countenance are an index to a happy and satisfied mind, Sambo was as well off as heart could wish; and I must certainly affirm, that it is a gratuitous and very questionable philanthropy that would pour an acid into such a breast, turning the sweet calm feelings of contentment into sour jealousy and vain ambition.

Let it not be supposed, however, that I am an advocate of slavery. No such thing. I abhor it. I abominate all tyrannical restraint, even to the chaining of a dog, caging of a bird, or confinement of a horse; but I do not hesitate to say that the negro must be in a better position with his master in the States, where he receives the light of Divine truth, and learns to become a useful member of society, than in his original savage condition, where he ekes out a mere animal existence in the most cruel state of thraldom, liable to be offered up as a sacrifice by his savage king to cure the barrenness of a favourite wife, or assuage the dyspeptic pangs of a pet monkey; after which his majesty would—if his larder afforded the delicacy—turn round to enjoy a snack on the remains of a cold missionary. Of all great public questions at home or abroad, slavery evermore has been the one agitated in most fierce extremes, and debated with the greatest cant and most consummate hypocrisy. I have, on the one hand, seen a puling abolitionist shedding crocodile tears over imaginary sorrows that he knew in his soul were never perpetrated, and was told on the other, by a holder in ——, "that such was his tender affection for his slaves, that in his glass factory he always employed white men for the furnace-work, which was so destructive to health." The abolitionist looked for tears of sympathy and commiseration for his fabricated grievance, and the holder, in bidding for the commendations of benevolence, *over*looked the glaring drawback that his motives originated, in his solicitude for the preservation of *a property* at the expense of a white brother's fate, who most probably had a wife and family depending on his life for support.

CHAPTER XIV.

Change of Weather—Quantities of Wild Geese—Wild Duck—Their Variety—Anecdote illustrative—The Country and its Adaptation for Settlement—Effects of browsing on the Fertility of the Soil—Demonstrated by Comparison—Williams's Ranch—One of the Olden Establishments—Nature of their Origin—Culpable Indifference of Early Settlers—Mania of Land Speculation after the Conquest—Over-eagerness of Purchasers—Alarming Revelations—Consequent Excitement—U.S. Agent specially commissioned to investigate the Matter—Spanish and Mexican Colonial Law and Practice—Mode of obtaining Grants—Consecutive Steps to acquire Rights—Courts of Record—Final Step to perfect Title—Subsequent Proceedings, embracing Survey, &c.—Mission Property—How constituted—When transferred from the Jesuits to the Franciscans—Subject to be secularised—Reference to Laws and Authorities concerning them—Their actual Rights—No Reservation in Mexican Grants as to Minerals—Concluding Paragraphs in the Report—Its general Tendency to soothe Public Feeling—Probability of a State Compromise.

THE morning was chill, but dry, as we continued our journey, with a stiff breeze ominously increasing, and absolute clouds of wild geese winging it away south, splitting the air with their screams, the wind and noise of their wings reaching us perceptibly as they passed, settling in myriads over the plains, and keeping up a strain of incessant shrieks, as they flapped out of the way of the elk and wild cattle in moving over the pasturage, to which they imparted a strange and unique aspect, with their long thin necks moving in the midst of the waving herbage, contrasting softly with its verdant hue. They are precisely of the same genus of those peculiar to our own islands, and, not being driven as yet by the progress of settlement to seek for sustenance on the coast, are free from the fishy flavour which excludes our wild goose from epicurean destruction, they attain a plumpness and rotundity of body fully equal to the largest barn-fed fowl, while they are so tame, from being unused to interruption, they can be shot with a little revolver. The wild duck, likewise, are devoid of apprehension, and sail past you, as you sit on the bank of the river, with as much confidence and nonchalance as the west-end pets in St. James's Park. Of those there are a considerable variety. Besides the duck and mallard, teal and widgeon, indentical with the British family, there is rather a curious species, called the "tree duck," from its habit of perching on branches and laying and hatching their eggs in the hollow forks of trees; and two or three other unchristened tribes, one as piebald as the magpie, the other perfectly white, the flesh of which latter one is soft and tasteless, and their skins so exceedingly flimsy, that it is impossible to pluck them without tearing them to atoms.

Sitting, one fine Sunday afternoon, on the banks of the Sacramento, the varieties were pointed out and described to me by the unfortunate Mr. Colville, who was murdered afterwards, who, while proceeding through the catalogue, pointed up, saying, "and here we have *tree* ducks," as a brace of birds skimmed closely over our heads. "You must be more accurate," I said, jokingly, "if I am to chronicle all your descriptions." "But I am quite correct," he replied. "I appeal to Mr. Mansfeldt;

—and there sit the pair in yonder tree." "Ay, but where is the third one?" said I. "I made no allusion to a third one." "Then both my eyes and ears are at fault; for that is precisely what constitutes our appeal. You exclaimed, 'There go *three* ducks,' while I could only count two." On which, they both burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, that was explained by a description of the peculiarities of those web-footed roosters.

The country continued to exhibit the same appearances of fertility, but without any picturesque features to vary the sameness or charm the capricious eye, as it expanded over an ocean of waving grass, extending from the river edge to the mountain base; unless it were the animal life with which it was studded. We passed by several places where nature seemed to invite the emigrant, from their peculiar adaptability to settlement; the river getting embayed at those points into what are termed sloughs, extending for miles inwards, affording a desideratum for grazing and domestic conveniences that will not, under the present order of things, continue to be long neglected. I observed a marked difference in the character of the herbage in those unsettled localities as compared with that around the various ranches, where the feeding is more regular and continuous, showing that the constant browsing brings on a thicker skin upon the soil; the close crop as it grows up in the early spring forming a perfect sheltering shade, effectually protecting the earth from the parching, baking effects of the sun, and enabling it to retain its moisture, which it yields gradually to the natural cravings of vegetation, instead of the thirsty demands of evaporation; whereas the natural grass and wild barley (as would be the case in a greater degree with cultivated crops) grow so rank and sparsely that, ere they stool and spread out, the hot season arrives, cakes and cracks the exposed soil, evaporating the material essence of fertility, absorbing the very pabulum of vegetation, and leaving the bereft crop to sicken and wither prematurely. Thus it was, in coming up in the autumn, herbage powdered into snuff in the unsettled districts, while around the few scattered ranches it retained a degree of verdure and succulence up to a very late period of the season; affording, in my humble opinion, a demonstrative proof that without irrigation agriculture can never be successfully followed in that country.

We arrived at noon at a Mr. Williams's ranch—a late purchase—where recent improvements, superadded to more antique erections, give it quite an extensive appearance. It is one of those few and far between establishments originally founded either by the early Spanish settlers—the emigrants I have alluded to in a previous chapter—or by Europeans, principally British, thinly but surprisingly scattered over the country, long, long before even Captain Sutter dreamt of fixing his abode there; some of those came seawards, cast away upon the coast, as they told me; others worked their way upland from the Mexican mines, intermarrying, and getting portions of land, with members of Spanish families that came to the country under the auspices of *emprasarios*,* many of whom neglected complying with the formalities of the colonisation laws of the government; or, getting direct grants from the governors, heedlessly omitted procuring the ratification of their titles, from the listless habits acquired by association, living in a sunny clime, surrendered to sensual enjoyments, and never once harbouring an idea that internal policy or foreign interference would call those unauthenticated documents in question; until, after the late conquest, when, in the delirious demand for land, most of them sold out to American speculators, who, in their rash eagerness to become possessed of the property, and their ignorance of Spanish law and language, concluded and consummated bargains without becoming cognisant of the invalidity of the conveyances; purchasing also from Spaniards similarly circumstanced, and from the incumbents of missions, who avowed that the absolute property vested in them, being unconditionally granted, not only for ecclesiastical uses, but as a reward for their labours in promoting the colonisation of the country,—an assertion which had a colourable authenticity about it, from the well-known policy of Spain in invariably establishing missions in remote provinces as instruments of their colonial system, making them the precursors of the more extensive emigration. Thus, in an incredibly short space of time, a vast quantity of lands changed hands; those with imperfect titles, as might naturally be expected, taking the lead in the transfers, the persons in possession not exacting the most extreme terms in their anxiety to dispose of their insecure tenures.

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* *Emprasarios* were, properly speaking, contractors, who stipulated for an absolute concession of large tracts of territory, proportioned in extent to the number of families they undertook to carry with them as permanent settlers in the new country.

But when the actual state of affairs came to be disclosed, a high feverish excitement ensued, that threatened to convert the meek sheepskins into a sea of trouble, and a very angry and tempestuous one, too; more particularly as news arrived that the United States' Government had come to the resolution of recognising and respecting all Spanish and Mexican grants, duly fulfilled and properly executed, before the conquest, and of treating as waste paper all those imperfect titles above alluded to; sending out, for the purpose of discriminating, a special agent, in the person of William Carey Jones, a gentleman, as I understand, eminently qualified, from his professional attainments, for discharging the duties of the arduous office; who, after a most strict and patient inquiry into all the Spanish and Mexican laws and precedents touching the subject, and a most rigid search amongst the archives and records of the late government, has compiled a clear and concise report, that exhibits the matter in all its bearings, divested of doubt or mystification.

With regard to the grants to individuals and *emprasarios*, he states: "All grants of land made in California (except pueblo, or village lots, and except some grants north of the Bay of San Francisco, as will be hereafter noticed), subsequent to the independence of Mexico, and after the establishment of that government in California, were made by the different political governors. The great majority of them were made subsequent to January, 1832, and consequently under the Mexican Colonisation Law of 18th of August, 1824, and the government regulations adopted in pursuance of the law, dated 21st of November, 1828. In January, 1832, General José Figueroa became governor of the then territory of California, under a commission from the government at Mexico, replacing Victoria, who, after having the year before displaced Echandrea, was himself driven out by a revolution. The installation of Figueroa restored quiet after ten years of civil commotion, and was at a time when Mexico was making vigorous efforts to reduce and populate her distant territories, and consequently granting lands on a liberal scale. In the act of 1824, a league square (being 4428 $\frac{402}{1000}$ acres) is the smallest measurement of rural property spoken of; and of these leagues square, eleven (or nearly 50,000 acres) might be conceded in a grant to a single individual. By this law, the *states* composing the federation were authorised to make special provision for colonisation within their respective limits, and the colonisation of the *territories*, 'conformably to the principles of the law,' charged upon the central government. California was of the latter description, being designated a territory in the *Acta Constitutiva* of the Mexican federation, adopted 31st of January, 1824, and by the constitution adopted 4th of October same year.* The colonisation of California, and the granting of lands therein, was, therefore, subsequent to the law of 18th of August, 1824, under the direction and control of the central government. That government, as already stated, gave regulations for the same 21st of November, 1828.

"The directions were very simple. They gave the government of the territories the exclusive right and faculty of making grants within the terms of the law; that is, to the extent of eleven leagues, or *sitios*, to individuals, and colonisation grants (more properly contracts), that is, grants of larger tracts, to *emprasarios*, or persons who should undertake, for a consideration in land, to bring families to the country for the purposes of colonisation. Grants of the first description, that is, to families or single persons, and not exceeding eleven sitios, were 'not to be held definitively valid until sanctioned by the *territorial deputation*.' Those of the second class, that is the *emprasario*, or colonisation grants (or contracts), required a like sanction from the *supreme government*. In case the concurrence of the deputation was refused to a grant of the first-mentioned class, the governor should appeal in favour of the grantee from the assembly to the supreme government.

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* The political condition of California was changed by the constitution of 29th of December, and the act for the division of the republic into departments, of the 30th of December, 1836. The two Californias then became a department, the confederation being broken up, and the states reduced to departments. The same colonisation system, however, seems to have continued in California.

"The '*first inception*' of the claim, pursuant to the regulations, and as practised in California, was a petition to the governor praying for the grant, specifying usually the quantity of land asked, and designating its position, with some descriptive object or boundary, and also stating the age, country, and vocation of the petitioner. Sometimes, also (generally at the commencement of the system), a rude *map* or *plan* of the required grant, showing its shape and position with reference to other tracts or natural objects, was presented with the petition. This practice, however, was gradually disused, and few of the grants made in late years have any other than a verbal description.

"The next step was usually a reference of the petition made in the margin by the governor to the prefect of the district, or other near local officer, where the land petitioned for was situate, to know if it was vacant and could be granted, without injury to third persons or the public, and sometimes to know if the petitioner's account of himself was correct. The reply (*informe*) of the prefect, or other officer, was written upon, or attached to the petition, and the whole returned to the governor. The reply being satisfactory, the governor then issued the grant in form. On its receipt, or before (often before the petition even), the party went into possession. It was not unfrequent, of late years, to omit the formality of sending the petition to the local authorities, and it was never necessary if the governor already possessed the requisite information concerning the land and the parties. Again: it sometimes happened that the reply of the local authorities was not explicit, or that third persons intervened, and the grant was thus for some time delayed. With these qualifications, and covering the great majority of cases, the practice may be said to have been—1st, the petition; 2nd, the reference to the prefect, or alcalde; 3rd, his report, or informe; 4th, the grant from the governor.

"The originals of the petition and informe, and any other preliminary papers in the case, were filed by the secretary in the government archives, and with them a copy (the original being delivered to the grantee) of the grant, the whole attached so as to form one document (entitled, collectively, an 'expediente'). During the governorship of Figueroa and some of his successors—that is, from the 22nd of May, 1833, to the 9th of May, 1836—the grants were likewise recorded in a book kept for that purpose (as prescribed in the regulations above referred to) in the archives. Subsequent to that time there was no record, but a brief memorandum of the grant, the expediente still filed. Grants were also sometimes registered in the office of the prefect of the district where the lands lay; but the practice was not constant, nor the record generally in a permanent form.

"The next, and final step in the title, was the approval of the grant by the territorial deputation (that is, the local legislature afterwards, when the territory was created into a department, called the 'Departmental Assembly'). For this purpose it was the governor's office to communicate the fact of the grant, and all information concerning it, to the assembly. It was here referred to a committee (sometimes called a Committee on Vacant Lands, sometimes on Agriculture), who reported at a subsequent sitting. The approval was seldom refused; but there are *numerous instances* where the governor *omitted to communicate the grant to the assembly, and it consequently remained unacted on.* The approval of the assembly obtained, it was usual for the secretary to deliver to the grantee, on application, a certificate of the fact; but no other record or registration of it was kept than the written proceedings of the assembly. *There are, no doubt, several instances where the approval was, in point of fact, obtained, but no certificate applied for;* and as the journals of the assembly, now remaining in the archives, are very imperfect, it can hardly be doubted that *many grants* have received the approval of the assembly; *but no record of the fact now exists.* Many grants were passed upon, and approved by the assembly, in the winter and spring of 1846, as I discovered by the loose memoranda, apparently made by the clerk of the assembly for future entry, and referring to the grants by their numbers—sometimes a dozen or more on a single small piece of paper—but of which I could find no other record.

"There was not, as far as I could learn, any regular surveys made of grants in California up to the time of the cessation of the former government; there was no public or authorised surveyor in the country. The grant usually contained a direction that the grantee should receive judicial possession of the land 'from the proper magistrate' (usually the nearest alcalde) in virtue of the grant, and that the boundaries of the tract should then be designated by the functionary with 'suitable landmarks.' But this injunction was usually complied with only by procuring the attendance of the magistrate, to give judicial possession, according to the verbal description contained in the grant. Some of the old grants have been subsequently surveyed by an officer appointed for that purpose by the governor. I did not see any official record of such surveys, or understand there was any. The *perfecting of the title* I suppose to have been accomplished when the grant *received the concurrence of the assembly, all provisions of the law, and of the colonisation regulations of the supreme government, pre-requisites to the title being 'definitively valid' 'having been fulfilled.' These, I think, must be counted complete titles.*"

As to Mission property, he labours to show by law, practice, and precedent, that the missionaries had no power to sell or assign; proving that those establishments were subject to be secularised at will, reverting or vesting in the sovereign or supreme government; thus opening all those sales or assignments, and leaving the purchases either at the mercy of the American Government, or to look to those astute parties to whom they paid over the purchase-money. He says:

"I took much pains, both in California and Mexico, to assure myself of the situation, in a legal and proprietary point of view, of the former great establishments known as the Missions of California. It had been supposed that the lands they occupied were grants, held as the property of the Church, or of the Mission establishments as corporations. Such, however, was not the case. All the Missions in Upper California were established under the direction, and mainly at the expense of the government; and the missionaries there never had any other rights than to the occupation and use of the lands for missionary purposes, and at the pleasure of the government. This is shown by the history and principles of their foundation, by the laws in relation to them, by the constant practice of the government towards them; and, in fact, by the rules of the Franciscan order, which forbid its members to possess property.*

"It was the custom throughout New Spain (and other parts of the Spanish colonies also) to secularise, or to subvert the Mission establishments, at the discretion of the ruling political functionary; and this not as an act of arbitrary power, but in the exercise of an acknowledged ownership and authority. The great establishments of Sonora, I have been told, were divided between the white settlements and settlements of the Indian pupils, or neophytes of the establishments. In Texas, the Missions were broken up and the Indians dispersed, and the lands have been granted to white settlers. In New Mexico, I am led to suppose the Indian pupils of the Missions, or their descendants, still in great part occupy the old establishments; and other parts are occupied by white settlers, in virtue of grants or sales. Their undisputed exercise of this authority over all the Mission establishments, and whatever property was pertinent to them, is certain.

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* Although, as Mr. Jones says, the Missions are now governed and administered by the Franciscan order, they were transferred to them from the Jesuits when the royal decree for abolishing that order was enforced in New Spain; but it was the Jesuits, who, under license from the Viceroy, commenced the reduction of California in 1697, by the establishment of fifteen Missions in that country. At the time of the transfer three were suppressed, and the remainder put in charge of the Franciscan monks of the College of San Fernando, in Mexico; hence sometimes called Fernandinos.

"The liability of the Missions of Upper California to be thus dealt with at the pleasure of the government, does not rest only on the argument to be drawn from this constant and uniform practice; it was inherent in their foundation—a condition of their establishment. A belief has prevailed, and it is so stated in all the works I have examined, which treat historically of the Missions of that country, that the first act which looked to their secularisation, and especially the first act by which any authority was conferred on the local government for that purpose, or over their temporalities, was an act of Mexican Congress of 17th August, 1833. Such, however, is not the case; their secularisation, their subversion, was looked for in their foundation; and I do not perceive that the local authority (certainly not the supreme authority) has ever been without that lawful jurisdiction over them, unless subsequent to the colonisation regulations of 21st November, 1828, which temporarily exempted Mission lands from colonisation. I quote from a letter of 'Instructions to the

Commandant of the new Establishments of San Diego and Monterey,' given by Viceroy Bucareli, 17th August, 1773: 'Article 15. When it shall happen that a Mission is to be formed into a pueblo (or village), the commandant will proceed to reduce it to the civil and economical government which, according to the laws, is observed by other villages of this kingdom; then giving it a name, and declaring for its patron the saint under whose memory and protection it was founded.'

"The right, then, to remodel these establishments at pleasure, and convert them into towns and villages, subject to the known policy and laws which governed settlements of that description, we see was a principle of their foundation. Articles 7 and 10 of the same 'Letter of Instructions' show us also that it was a part of the plan of the Missions that their condition should be thus changed, that they were regarded only as the nucleus and bases of communities, to be thereafter emancipated, acquire proprietary rights, and administer their own affairs; and that it was the duty of the governor to choose their sites, and direct the construction and arrangement of their edifices, with a view to their convenient expansion into towns and cities. And not only was this general revolution of the establishments thus early contemplated and provided for, but meantime the governor had authority to reduce their possessions by grants within and without, and to change their condition by detail. The same series of instructions authorised the governer to grant lands, either in community or individually, to the Indians of the Missions, in and about their settlement on the Mission lands, and also to make grants to white persons. The governor was likewise authorised, at an early day, to make grants to soldiers who should marry Indian women trained in the Missions; and the first grant (and only one I found on record) under this authorisation, was of a tract near the Mission edifice of Carmel, near Monterey. The authorisation given to the captains of *presidios* to grant lands within two leagues of their posts, expressly restrains them within that distance, so as to leave the territory beyond—though all beyond was nominally attached to one or other of the Missions—at the disposition of the superior guardians of royal property. In brief, every fact, every act of government, and principle of law applicable to the case which I have met in this investigation, go to show that the Missions of Upper California were never from the first reckoned other than government establishments, or the founding of them to work any change in the ownership of the soil, which continued in, and at the disposal of the Crown or its representatives. This position was also confirmed, if it had needed confirmation, by the opinions of high legal and official authorities in Mexico. The Missions—speaking collectively of priests and pupils—had the *usufruct*, the priests the administration of it, the whole resumable, or otherwise disposable, at the will of the Crown or its representatives."

Mr. Jones's attention was also specially directed to inquire as to whether in any of the alleged grants, or all grants in general (under the Mexican Government), or in California in particular, there were not reservations as to mines of gold, silver, quicksilver, and other minerals; but it appears that the Mexican laws regulating colonisation do not enjoin any such reservation in their grants, nor was there any such contained in the few *bonâ fide* documents that came under his inspection. After an able and lucid review of Spanish and Mexican law, and practices regulating and bearing upon colonisation, he thus concludes:

"Having met, Sir, as far as in my power, the several inquiries set forth in the letter of instructions you were pleased to honour me with, my attention was turned, as far as they were not already answered, to the more detailed points of examination furnished me, with your approbation, by the Commissioner of Public Lands. The very minute information contemplated by those instructions it would have been impossible, as you justly anticipated, to obtain in the irregular and confused state of the archives and courts of record. My examination, moreover, was sufficient to show me that such minute and exact information, on many of the heads proposed, is not attainable at all, and that the only mode of approximating it must be through such measures as will produce a general registration of written titles, and verbal proof of possession where titles are wanting, followed or accompanied by a general survey; by such means only can an *approximation* be made to the minute information sought, of the character, extent, position, and date, particularly of the old grants of California.

"The grants in California, I am bound to say, are mostly perfect titles,—that is, the holders possess their property by titles that under the law that created them were equivalent to patents from our government; and those which are not perfect—that is, which lack some formality, or evidence of completeness—have the same equity as those which are perfect, and were and would have been equally respected under the government which has passed away; of course I allude to grants made in good faith, and not to simulated grants, if there be any such issued, since the persons who make them cease from their functions in that respect.

"I think the state of land titles in that country will allow the public lands to be ascertained, and the private lands set apart by judicious measures, with little difficulty. Any measure calculated to discredit, or cause to be distrusted, the general character of titles there, besides *the alarm and anxiety* which it would create amongst the ancient population and *present holders of property*, would, I believe, also retard the substantial improvement of that country: a title discredited is not destroyed, but every one is afraid to touch it, or, at all events, to invest labour and money in improvements that rest on a suspected tenure; the holder is afraid to improve; and others are afraid to purchase, or, if they do purchase at the discredited value, willing only to make inconsiderable investments in it. The pressure of population and the force of circumstances will soon operate to break up the existing large tracts into farms of such extent as the nature of the country will allow of, and the wants of the community require; and this under circumstances, and with such assurance of tenure, as will warrant those substantial improvements that the thrift and prosperity of the country in other respects invite.

"I think the rights of the government will be fully secured, and the interests and permanent prosperity of all classes in that country best consulted, *by no other measure in relation to private property* than an authorised survey, according to the grants; where the grants are modern, or since the accession of the Mexican Government, reserving the overplus, or, according to ancient possession, where it dates from the time of the Spanish Government, and the written evidence of the grant is lost, or does not afford data for survey. But providing that in any case where, from the opinion of the proper law officer, or agent of the government in the state, or from information in any way received, there may be reason to suppose a grant invalid, the government (or a proper officer of it) may direct a suit to be instituted for its annulment."

The importance of the subject must be my excuse for quoting so freely from this report, which, while it appears to treat the subject in a spirit of candour and impartiality, is replete with internal evidence that it was framed at once with a view of relieving government from a delicate and difficult dilemma, by suggestive expedients of a mild and temporising character, and of annihilating the pretensions of missionary grants, which claim to be so numerous and extensive, dealing with them in a special pleading and black-letter temper that foreshadows the doom of Church property in California; the alienation of which, independent of sectarian prejudices, would be a highly popular measure amongst Americans in their rapacious greed for land in the new territory. The diffusion of the report, indicating, as it does, the course government is likely to pursue, has already had the effect of "oil on the troubled waters," allaying the violent feeling that existed amongst the land and lot speculators —a much more numerous class than could at first have been imagined, multiplied prodigiously by the myriads of town lot purchasers in the several towns and cities started throughout the country—who, in the bitterness of their apprehension, openly avowed their determination of fomenting and joining in a counter-revolution rather than have their properties, for which they paid so dearly, wrested from them. There is no danger, however, that matters will come to violent extremities; for, independent of the troublous consequences that would result from a strict and stern line of procedure, it would deal a fatal blow at that indomitable spirit of enterprise, so distinguishing a characteristic of the nation, which, in the short space of two years has reared up a great commercial territory on the silent and unfrequented shores of the Northern Pacific, giving birth to a city without a parallel in ancient or modern times; springing, as it were, from the cranium of the volcanic mountains, which constitute its marvellous wealth, completely accoutred in the full panoply of trade, commerce, and science. In such a case a wise government can afford to make large compromises and concessions, rather than crush and ruin a large community, who made their investments in good faith, and who deserve so well of the parent country for their unprecedented energy and perseverance.

CHAPTER XV.

Business at Williams's Ranch—Sycamore Slough—State of the Trail—An unenviable Night's Board and Lodging—Sleetstorm—How we got over the Slough—A better Night's Quarters—An unwelcome Visit from Wild Cattle—They abduct our Oxen—Our Pursuit; its Difficulties, Dangers, and Success—How we dealt with the Truants—Feel the want of Water while trudging through the Mud—The Lone Oak—Mr. Harbin's Station—Cheap Beef—Mr. Harbin supplies with a Party to recover our missing Cattle—Their Mode of Procedure—Accept an Offer of a Morning's Amusement—Lassoing Wild Horses—Description of the Feat—Californian equestrian Accoutrements—The Sequel—Fatal Accident—Daring Feat of Horsemanship and Horse-training—Travel by Night to make up for lost Time—Reach Mr. Harbin's Head-quarters on Cash Creek—Californian Swine—Profitable and secure Stock—Scarcity of Sheep, and the Cause—Peculiar Conformation of the Rams—Wood-choppers on the Sacramento and its Tributaries—Shocking Aspect of the Plains as we approximate the City—How Sacramento grew in my short Absence—A Winter's Effect on the Style of Architecture—The City during the Flood—Evaporation versus Drainage—The March of Enterprise—Scarcity of Lime—Its domestic Consequences—Feeling on my Transition from Nomadic to City Life—Hotels and Pandemoniums increase in a like Ratio—Absence of Churches and Clergymen—A Field for Moral Reflections—The Press at Sacramento—Its pharisaical Conduct—An editorial Leader—Its natural Tendency—Editorial Puffs; how manufactured—Sacramento and its probable Destiny—How accounted for—Steam Navigation on the River—A public Convenience a Private Mine of Wealth—A moderate Calculation—A Supper on board the Senator—Prodigious Gastronomic Performance—"Odorous" Comparisons.

THERE was great bustle about Mr. Williams's ranch, what with the calling of waggon companies and packmen, and the arrival of small launches. An active trade was going on in buying, selling, and exchanging mules, horses, and oxen, and a lively bibulous business in the alcoholic line; but our favourite beverage was not to be had for "love or money," there being no dairy. The calves were permitted to run with the cows, so that we were reluctantly obliged to return to our old fare. The afternoon became exceedingly cold, the wind increasing to a furious gale, spitting sleet so bitterly that we could not face it only that we were proceeding in excellent shelter along the river skirting, which was not altogether without its drawbacks, for now and then a dozed and rotten limb, fractured by the gale, would come smashing down amongst the branches, to our imminent risk. However, we managed to go on tolerably well until we came to what is called the "Sycamore Slough," a gut of still water, connecting the river with a laguna, which extends the greater part of the distance back to the mountains, expanding considerably in some places, but never attaining a great depth. It is thinly fringed for a short distance by the timber from which it takes its name, the remainder of its shores being low sticky swamps, covered with tule.

In summer you can follow in the trail by the river edge, but it was now so deep we were forced to diverge, and travel up along it for several miles, the cattle constantly miring, the waggon-wheels working the entire way up to the hubs in mud. Still we struggled on till night, in expectation of reaching some spot that would afford a little feed, but were not so fortunate, a mud-hole arresting our progress in the worst and most inhospitable part of the marsh, where the state of the ground would not admit of the pitching of a tent, without an atom of firewood, the raw wind and sleet driving amongst us with most chilling effect. There was no shift but to chain our exhausted animals to the waggon-wheels—otherwise they would stray back in search of grass and shelter—we ourselves being obliged to put up with the cold comfort of a raw pork supper, and a night's repose, cramped and huddled up, in a sitting posture, in the waggons.

The morning opened with a fierce hailstorm, the rain that had fallen during the night rendering the ground so soft that, with our starved and half-famished animals, it appeared a hopeless expectation to think of moving; nor could we budge an inch until we completely emptied the waggons, carrying the contents on our backs about three miles, to where the crossing was practicable, then returning and assisting the oxen. When we got them as far as the crossing we gave them a rest, while we again shouldered our loads, and waded, waist deep, with empty stomachs, over the laguna, which was about five hundred yards wide, the water intensely cold, and the sleet so penetrating that, by the time we returned, we were in a chattering, if not a communicative mood. However, move forward we should, prefacing the attempt by cutting down numerous bundles of tule, and strewing it thickly the entire breadth of the waggon trail, to form a foot road for the oxen, as well as one for the wheels; but, after several ineffectual trials, we had to unyoke them, finding it altogether impossible to get them to pull evenly and simultaneously, for at the time one yoke would get on tolerably firm footing, those behind or before them would be floundering belly deep in the mire. We even had great difficulty in getting them singly, and unattached, as far as the water, where our chief trouble ended, the bottom of the laguna being comparatively firm, enabling them to ford it without an accident. We had a long and laborious job in getting over the waggons by hand; but the hauling and spoking had one good effect in quickening and warming the circulation, which was checked and almost frozen up by the cold and exposure. Fortunately the land on the opposite side was more elevated, enabling us to put in our teams again, and reach a good camping spot early in the evening, where we amply indemnified ourselves for our late privations.

Soon after, in the early part of the night, we were aroused by the lowing and bellowing of wild cattle, which is easily distinguishable from that of the American breed; and as we offered no interruption, they kept approximating, attracted by the strange oxen, until, by the tumult, we began to fear they might trample down our tents. However, a few shots fired in the air, that we might not cripple any of our own in the dark, sent them scampering off in wild confusion; but when morning dawned we discovered, to our dismay, that they carried off in their retreat all our steers, notwithstanding the fatigues and sufferings of the two previous days. Their tracks showed the direction they took; but to the view, bounded only by the horizon, there was no appearance of their whereabouts. One course alone remained to pursue—to follow up the footmarks, which we did for about five or six miles, when a dark streak, about as far more ahead, discovered the herd we were in quest of, numbering, at least, one thousand head, taking in calves and yearlings. They permitted us to come close enough to see that our cattle were amongst them, but how to disconnect them was the question, for whenever we attempted closing on them they broke away in a burst, outstripping in fleetness our heavy, lumbering beasts, who, however, commingled with them again as soon as they stopped. We had well-nigh despaired of regaining them, but, as a last resource, divided our small party into four groups, approaching them at four opposite points, and closing cautiously, which plan, though attended with great danger, succeeded admirably, detaching sixteen, who, I may say, surrendered at discretion—being left completely isolated by the impetuous burst the wild cattle finally made—on seeing themselves hemmed round by our manœuvre. We abandoned the balance as irrecoverable, dividing what we secured equally amongst the four waggons, for some only got one yoke, while others got their entire team.

It was too late to start when we returned to camp, so we put the truants in chains until morning, and made a twilight start, right through the heart of the prairie, our detour up the slough having separated us from the river—a circumstance we felt very inconvenient, even at that early period of the season, for though the ground was deep and slushy, we could not get a drop of water all day. Travelling up to a very late hour of the night before we made the "Lone Oak," a large tree, standing alone on the vast plain, close by a pond of water, which forms a sort of natural tavern to the wayfarer; not far from which a Mr. Harbin has what may be properly denominated a draft farm, without any other permanent fixture than a large corral, his house and head-quarters being about twenty miles below, and as he thins the stock, by sale or slaughter, he replenishes it from the upper station, where he keeps immense herds of cattle and horses; and it so happened that he and his partner—a young Californian (whose name I forget)—were then upon a drafting expedition. I was rather surprised in the morning on seeing a tent so contiguous under the arms of the Lone Oak, from one of whose branches was suspended an entire beeve; and as soon as I saw the inhabitants of the tent amove, I went over to inquire if there was any of the meat for sale, when Mr. Harbin told me "they shot it for their own use, and not to sell; but as they had more than they required, I could have what I wanted without any charge;" at the same time marking a portion of the best part of the hind-quarter for an Indian to cut off, that would at least weigh one hundred weight.

After making my acknowledgments for the kind favour, I told him of our mishap, and proposed hiring horses for our men to go and hunt the remainder of our cattle from the wild drove, which were then within view, not much over two miles away. But he obligingly said he would lend us his Indians, who would perform the task with much greater celerity, without the same risk; for inexperienced hands would be in danger not only of getting the horses gored, but of losing their own lives. I again gratefully thanked him for his great civility, and collected our men to follow the Indians, that we might drive the cattle to camp as soon as they were detached. The Californian—a fine, agile, athletic young fellow—rode out for the mere fun of the thing, and certainly was more efficient than the whole of the Indians, who adopted somewhat similar tactics to those we ourselves employed the day before—outflanking the herd, by making a circuit sufficiently wide to prevent alarm, preconcerting that "when they got directly opposite us both infantry and cavalry should charge;" and as we moved, down they came with whirlwind speed, directing their course to where they could discern a foreign oxen. The Californian cattle immediately broke away with the swiftness of antelopes, leaving our steers as cleanly separated as heavy wheat from the chaff in a gust of wind. They then rode round and gathered them into a cluster for us, after which we got them home without any trouble.

We all spent the evening jovially together; and as they would not take any return for their services, we endeavoured to make some slight remuneration for favours conferred, by the production of some excellent brandy, that we carried along with us; but next morning, as we were about hitching up, to proceed on our journey, my Californian friend invited us to wait a few hours, to see some sport, as he said they intended to lass, and back one of their finest horses. We gladly delayed to witness the sport, and got a good start towards the herd, while he went to make his preparations; and, as he dashed up after us, mounted on a fiery steed, divested of coat and vest, his broad sombrero compressed on his handsome brow, the *facha*[*] tightened round his waist, the *riata*[†] coiled in his hand, and a pair of huge spurs, with rowels large and stout enough to mount a small piece of ordnance, he presented a subject worthy of the pencil of Edwin Landseer.

In his first charge he did not get within throwing distance, as the destined captive, with about six others, headed the flight, while those they outstripped retarded the pursuit; but when he got through the rear ranks he

[*] *Facha* is a silken sash, worn in lieu of suspenders.

[†] *Riata* is the rope with which the operation of lassoing is effected.

slackened his pace for a few moments, when those in advance wheeled round, puffing and snorting wildly from their distended nostrils, as with proudly arched necks, flowing manes, and extended tails, they circuitously returned towards the main body, trotting with that grand majestic action which, with all our art, the trained horse can never be made to attain, and only faintly imitate, their eyes lit up with the fire of freedom, and tossing their heads from side to side with an air of haughty independence. Watching an averse toss, our friend, with the quickness of thought, made his second dash, gaining wonderfully by the opportunity and the suddenness of his start, and throwing in mid career, effected the lasso,* being obliged, however, to let go his hold, from the rapid dart the lassoed horse made when the noose got over his head, but still following him at full speed, until his pace, being somewhat checked as he came upon the herd, his pursuer made what I can only compare to a dive, without dismounting, and catching the end of the *riata*, gave it a turn round the horn of the saddle,† reining in at the same time; again giving the spurs for a spurt, and soon after reining in again; in fact, playing with his captive as an angler would a salmon, until he brought about exhaustion, the noose acting all the while on the windpipe. The struggle was a tough one; but, in less than one hour from the first charge, the wild horse was a prisoner within the corral.

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* Many people (as I was myself) were under the impression that "*lasso*" was the name of the instrument or cord; but it is called "*riata*." *Lasso* is the noose at the extremity, the throwing of which is designated "throwing the lasso."

† All Californian and Mexican saddles are made with an upright fixture in front, about nine inches long, called a horn, either a natural part of the tree, or so firmly attached, that it cannot be broken off without tearing the saddle apart. The front of the saddle is made particularly strong, to give stability to the horn, which is indispensable in lassoing wild animals, the strain being too much at times for the strongest arm. It is used also for slinging the rifle, or holsters, and the *riata*, and is frequently adorned with a handsome head, emblematically carved; and, amongst the grandees, generally composed of gold or silver.

There was now another rope, but round his neck, and by means of both he was drawn up short to a tree, that formed one of the corners of the corral, and a bridle, with a bit of fearful leverage, got into his mouth, after a hard tussle; but the saddle could not be properly secured until another noose was got on one of his legs and the others then tangled in the ropes. The coil of the *riata*, in this operation, was made smaller, with one edge placed on the toes—the foot being cocked up—the other leaning against the shin, the man about to throw it keeping his leg swinging, until, as the horse gave either a kick or a high bound, he gave the foot a quick jerk and discharged it. The Californian succeeded in the third attempt, and so managed in cramping the horse's legs that the saddle was adjusted and girthed up with a broad haircloth sirsingle, impossible to burst from its elasticity, and affording the rider a place for sticking his spurs in, which, together with their skill in horsemanship, makes his seat next thing to a fixture. As soon as the horse was fully accoutred, an Indian—a sort of professional in the calling—was put up, the animal humping his back and plunging as well as he could in the meshwork that surrounded him. As he got calmer, he was gradually extricated and led out of the corral, with an Indian holding each cheek of the bridle, and then liberated; after a few steps, finding the legs free, he set to plunging in the most violent manner, but was brought up after a little by a liberal use of the powerful bridle. He then stood stock-still for about half a minute, until the rider gave him a slight prick, when he bounded away with a mad impulse, every few strides making a wild jump all fours, with his head doubled down, and then rushing forward and kicking out fiercely. At one moment he appeared to have got complete self-control, darting off with lightning speed over a considerable space, but was again brought back on his haunches by a violent pull, when he commenced rearing, kicking, plunging, and buck-jumping without intermission for full ten minutes. When at length he did pause, from physical exhaustion, we remarked the rider drooping forward, as if from fatigue or a strain, but not recovering himself with his usual celerity, the Californian ran up to ascertain the cause, and found, to his dismay, the unfortunate Indian quite dead, held in his seat by the spurs, some internal rupture having taken place during the struggle. There was no external effusion of blood that would likely have followed the bursting of a blood vessel in the lungs, so that we were not able to decide on the immediate cause of his death.

A feeling of gloom and sadness at this fatal occurrence overcast us all, except the Californian, who seemed animated and excited by a feeling of revenge and retribution, as, leading the horse back to the corral, assisted by the other Indians, he swore he would suffer the same fate or break his froward temper, from which resolution all our entreaties failed to dissuade him; while, in a spirit of fair play, he even took off the bridle and slackened the girth to let him recruit during the delay of an early dinner. This time, in accordance with a suggestion of mine, they blindfolded the animal while arranging his caparisons, which, as I anticipated, ensured his passiveness: a much easier bridle, too, was substituted, our friend vaulting into the saddle with all the confidence of invincibility. The horse gave a few awkward leaps when he found himself again bestrode, and then stood extended in a sort of tremble, from which even the spurs could scarce make him move, being got outside by a series of nervous starts, that showed the terror which possessed him. The Californian then (having previously headed him towards a copse of low brush, about knee high, which extended more than a mile) reached forward and pulled the shawl from his eyes; the bandage removed, the noble animal gazed about for a few moments with a strained look of bewilderment, and then, rearing forward, set off with a vigour unabated by his previous exertion. Nor was he restrained in the slightest degree, but rather urged, as he tore through the scrub with terrific velocity; sods and sticks flying from his heels in showers, he soon gained the clear plain, and with head stretched forward, seemed to make fresh efforts to fly from beneath his rider; but nature's energies at length began to yield and the pace to slacken; his head was soon after plucked up, and his course directed straight towards where we stood, the rider hustling and spurring him as if at the finish of a race. Ere long the close compact stride was changed into a spread, sprawling gallop as he laboured through the sticky ground; and, by the time the poor brute reached the waggons, he was run to a perfect standstill, panting and vanquished, the tame slave of his future master, no more to revel unrestrained, or gambol in the sportive wantonness of primitive freedom; the sparkling eye, the curved crest, the elastic step of the prairie's pride being thenceforward doomed to give place to the dull, passive, comeliness and gait of a daily drudge.

We left about one o'clock with a determination of reaching Cash Creek, where Mr. Harbin and two other rancheros have established themselves, even though it involved the necessity of travelling by night to do so. The country became rolling and undulating, covered with luxuriant verdure, but saturated with moisture in the dips and level spaces. A range of bluffs arose betwixt us and the coast mountains, along the ridges of which elk and wild cattle roamed about and fed in unusual numbers, while in the low grounds along which we travelled the wild geese would scarcely condescend to make a lane for us to pass through. The *habitans* were all abed when we arrived; but the noise of our geeing and whoing soon brought a glimmer to the windows and a blaze to the hearth, that quickly awakened the savoury music of the pan—sounds much more agreeable than would have been the piping of the great original Pan on the occasion. Here we found milk galore, butter in abundance, with elk-meat, beef, pork, venison without stint, and a pair of truly pretty girls to shed a charm over the dispensations—a charm co-existent with creation, as potent, as delightful, but one that came upon us with a spell akin to divinity, as their sweet and tender tones fell softly and suasively on ears so long attuned to gruff, discordant voices, deliciously enhancing the kind and delicate attentiveness of female ministration so unexpectedly rendered to men almost weaned from the habit of such social beatitudes.

There were plenty of swine rooting and grunting about the ranches on Cash Creek; the first I saw in California of an excellent breed and in prime condition, though left entirely to their own resources. It is a matter of surprise that all the rancheros do not keep them, multiplying as they do so rapidly, and commanding so high a price; besides which, there is a peculiar security in that kind of property, as the Indians there, like the Jews, have a repugnance to the use of their flesh, and, therefore, never interfere with them; while the coyotes—whether it be from a similar disrelish, or a dread of attacking them—do not molest them in the slightest; not so, however, with sheep, which they persecute with such an insatiable rapacity, that very few, indeed, undertake the trouble and risk of breeding them. Those that engage in the pursuit have Indian herds, who live out amongst the flocks all the time, with a sort of sheep-dog that is littered and reared on the prairie, and never wanders from his charge in search of domestic tit-bits other than those to be had about the Indian herd's primitive establishment. The sheep are of a very inferior description, stunted in growth, with coarse wool, and tasteless flesh; but the ram is remarkable from his frontal conformation, never having less than two pair of horns, and not unfrequently three and a half; one pair standing out in the ordinary way, two curled closely along the jaws and side of the head, the odd one, like that assigned to the unicorn, jutting from the centre of the forehead.

The plains about Cash Creek are vastly extensive, pleasantly wooded, offering a fine field for settlement, but subject to that dropsical endemic that mars systematic or extensive cultivation. The trail from this point was very bad, and our progress not much above a snail's pace, from the depth to which our wheels sunk in the slushy soil, even though we selected the highest lines, irrespective of direction. We struck the Sacramento again near the mouth of Cash Creek, where commences the encampments of wood-choppers, who continue in an almost unbroken line all the way down to the city, all actively employed; the heavy timber making fine lumber, the lighter limbs and branches firewood, which they get to market in rafts;* the former commanding a profitable price at the saw-mills below, which has induced many of the emigrants from the Western States, frontiermen, and necessarily familiar with the axe, to go into the chopping business along Feather River and the Juba,—the first thing that tended to reduce the exorbitant rates of lumber. Vegetation, though we proceeded south, was much more backward than above, as the land, being more depressed in level with respect to the river, was longer submerged, great tracts being still under water.

We now began to meet numerous ox and mule carcases, drowned in the winter floods; but our last day's journey displayed a spectacle unequalled in character, our route, for many miles, being a perfect labyrinth through the rotting remains of cattle, emitting a thick putrid stench, amounting to vapour, that almost made the atmosphere palpable with the sickening abominations, and must have rendered those fertile districts valueless the ensuing season for either hay or pasture. Those were the animals of the late emigration, worn down and enfeebled by the dreadful fatigues of the journey, which were sent on arrival to the most contiguous pasture, and, weakly as they were, soon were engulphed in the swelling waters.

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* A new era in rafting has arisen with the other wonders of California, rafts being now constructed on Columbia River, Oregon, put out to sea, and towed by sailing-vessels along the coast to Francisco; the first time it ever was attempted on the open ocean. Should it come on to blow, the tow-line is passed forward, and the vessel hove to during the gale, riding as comfortably behind the raft as she would to leeward of a breakwater. It should be observed, however, that wind almost always prevails there from the north to north-west, making it a free wind the entire passage.

I have already twice noticed the city of Sacramento, and yet I must be pardoned for again saying a few words on its wonderful increase in size, and improvement in appearance and reality; streams of busy life flowing where I left filthy suburbs; the old streets elongated, the two principal ones, which run parallel, being connected at regular and convenient intervals, with cross streets laid out with great regularity, and that fronting the river extending north and south the full length of the long line of shipping, while innumerable infantile thoroughfares were indicated by the scattered houses that stood at intervals along their margins; all the gossamer edifices, of which the city was composed when I left it in the fall, having vanished before the frowns of winter, like so many gaudy butterflies, making room for handsome, substantial lumber buildings, firmly put together, relieved by light balconies, tastefully constructed, with fanciful balustrades, supported on neatly carved brackets and covered with decorative verandahs, ornamental tracery mouldings twining round the windows and underneath the projecting barges, altogether conferring a graceful picturesque appearance to the whole. They are raised on log piles, intended to be sufficiently elevated to place them above the level of the floods; but the very highest were reached by the late inundations, which converted the streets into canals, too deep for either wading or riding; so that during its continuance, like Venice, all communication or transition was by means of boats, without, however, a dry spot to form a Rialto where merchants could congregate.

Though the waters had subsided to their ordinary seasonal level before my arrival, large pools remained in various places unabsorbed, into which all the floating nuisances had receded, which were now reeking with fœtid odours, presenting objects equally repugnant to the sight. Many of those pools were underneath the houses, serving as receptacles for the slops and nuisances of the families, without a chance of draining, from the position of the city, and, as I have already remarked, must be highly prejudicial to the health of the inhabitants, who boldly maintain that the absorption and evaporation are so great, that they supersede the necessity of sewerage; an opinion I will not stay to combat beyond the extent of its personal effects, being merely a bird of passage.

The reader will remember I recorded the particulars of a *fête* that took place the previous fall, on the opening of the first hotel, conducted according to usages and requirements of civilised life; but betwixt September, 1849, and February, 1850, no less a number than seventeen of a similar class, together with others of humbler pretensions, had sprung up, and were in good business; a circumstance calculated to demonstrate the marvellous march of enterprise, intercourse, and settlement in California. I put up at the City Hotel, from a feeling that my participation in the opening feast constituted a claim on my patronage; and everything, I must say, was well conducted, except the attendance in the dormitory department, where you were obliged to be content with the chance accommodation that was most stingily distributed, and keep a sharp look-out that some more neglected and unceremonious neighbour did not invade your cell, carrying off water, towel, basin, brushes—in fact, "leave not a *rack* behind." The want of lime leads to a dreadful nuisance, in the facilities those odious vermin, rats and mice, are afforded in secreting and disporting themselves, for, in the absence of mortar and putty, ceilings and framed partitions are covered with a strong grey calico, over which they gallop with a noise that at first is perfectly startling, and always annoying. My first night on a regular bed, in a close pent-up room, after the nomadic life I had been leading, was far from being one of repose; the compound atmosphere of fumes and exhalations being such a stranger to my lungs, that my respiration was quick and irregular, while the incessant tumult of my new neighbours was so perfectly distracting, that, when a feverish doze did once happen to close my eyelids, I started up frantically, under the impression that I was nailed into a coffin, with the impatient rats running over the lid in search of an aperture to get at their favourite repast.

I must not omit noticing how gambling-houses increased about in the same ratio as hotels, exhibiting the usual sequence of demand and supply. The increased number of travellers, indicated by the multiplication of hotels, requiring an additional area for recreation, had new pandemoniums fitted up for their accommodation; but I searched about and looked over the roofs of the city in vain for some emblem of religion—some external evidence of Christianity—some stately steeple or tapering spire rearing its hallowed head amidst this crowd of worldly edifices—some house or tent where "two or three might gather together in the Lord's name;" but no such place existed in Sacramento, nor was there a regular clergyman of any creed within its precincts; yet zealous missionaries penetrate with hope amongst the most savage Indians. Let me ask, then, was it absolute despair that caused them to shun those Christianised children of Mammon? The press, whose duty it should be to correct and improve this state of society, I regret to say were sadly wanting in that high moral duty; for, instead of wielding the scourge with the chastening sincerity of honest reformers, they winked at and indirectly encouraged the great leviathan vice, which sheltered every other species of depravity beneath its infernal wings. I might, to be sure, take up a newspaper and find a mild deprecation timidly shrinking into the corners of one page; while staring out on the opposite one, in the most flaunting and attractive type, would be a "*true story*," calculated to sow the black seed even in virgin soil, uncontaminated by a germ of indigenous vice; in illustration of which I will copy verbatim an article—a leader—in the principal Sacramento journal:

"GRAND STROKE OF GOOD FORTUNE.

"A man, lately returned from the diggins, where he made the respectable rise of 5000 dollars, turned into one of those fashionable haunts where gaming in its most attractive guise is carried on; after looking on for a little, his good genius prompted him to try his luck; so he sat down, and in less than one hour won the great sum of 100,000 dollars; but foolishly persevering, in expectation of achieving the fame of 'breaking the bank' (a thing, we need scarcely say, not to be accomplished, from the large capital those gentlemen invest in their concerns), his pile became reduced to 50,000 dollars, when, with a very commendable prudence, he transferred it into 'button park,' and took his leave. We regret to say that this fascinating vice is greatly on the increase in this country."

It is unnecessary to add, that the whole story was a wilful lie from beginning to end, being merely a puffing advertisement, for a "valuable consideration," to forward the vice it hypocritically pretended to deplore. There can be little doubt about the tendency of the article, or its intent to entrap some other miner, who has made "a respectable rise," to yield to the promptings of his "good genius," which, pointing to one of those "fashionable haunts," bids him enter, and win "100,000 dollars, if only he can refrain from attempting the *impossible achievement* of breaking the bank." What a pity it is so "fascinating a vice should be on the increase in the country." Another complaint is sustainable against the press of a similar complexion—I allude to its habit of lending itself to the propagation of those baseless stories, got up by speculators to advance the lot market of some "city in buckram," started solely with a view of gulling the public, causing a rush of miners to the neighbourhood of a new ranch, by calling public attention to "the recent discoveries at —— Creek, where several leads were found, yielding 6 ounces to the hand, of the purest metal, specimens of which can be seen at this office, a friend having favoured the editor with the *inspection of a few;*" the price of the fabulous puff, which most generally takes, hurrying hundreds off from the place they were making average wages, to this extraordinary creek, where they work their six days without gaining the sixth part of an ounce, and then lie "like *yallow* ——," as they say, to entrap fresh pigeons, and get themselves reimbursed for lost time by getting high prices for valueless claims.*

The general trade of Sacramento increased correspondingly with its other improvements, but from the number of towns and cities springing into existence higher up on the river and its tributaries, equally accessible, so far as draught of water is concerned, to vessels of large burden, I am of opinion that its precocious start will not continue to be sustained, for goods can be carried much cheaper by water than by waggon, especially in a country without thoroughfares; and as it is the cost of carriage that so prodigiously enhances their value, the miner will be enabled to purchase them at a reduced rate, exempted from the necessity of undertaking a tedious, toilsome journey, and of absenting himself from profitable employment for a long time in getting his supplies. I am therefore persuaded that the second-rate great cities destined to arrive at eminence in California, will be those located at the head of deep water navigation, in as proximate positions as possible to the mines. The mines contiguous to Sacramento are those that were discovered at the start, and having been so worked, in every shape and way, they must by this time be pretty nigh exhausted—a surmise which, if it have a base to rest upon, fixes the present position of the city as the topmost rung of its ladder of destiny; and I should add, emigrants coming by any of the land routes, strike the various diggings far away from it, where they can as cheaply supply all their wants in the immediate vicinity; while those arriving seawards go right away to their several destinations, by means of steamers, with which the rivers are now crowded, without any necessity beyond curiosity for stopping there—a venerable motive which gets very little countenance or encouragement amongst the miners. Stockton, on the San Joaquim, stands where it bids defiance to competition, and will assuredly become the capital of the southern mines; but Sacramento, situated according to the taste and views of Captain Sutter, will yet be eclipsed by many cities still in embryo.

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* I must say, that on my return from the Sandwich Islands, I found the tone and character of the press much improved, the original proprietors—who were not actuated by any higher feeling than making it a marketable investment—having in most cases sold out to men possessed of the *amour propre* devoted to it as a permanent profession, and bringing principle and talent to the task.

The increase of the river steam navigation perceptibly thinned the forests of masts that lined the levee of the embarcadero, all those that remained having apparently taken leases for life of their moorings, with nothing but their lower masts and standing rigging left, let out as tenements, of all characters and descriptions; the trip to Francisco, which used to occupy from seven to nine days, coming to be a journey of as many hours, two magnificent boats running up and down alternate days, under arrangements admirably calculated for the convenience of the mercantile community.

I booked myself on board the *Senator*, a new boat, of great power and accommodation, built for the Boston and Halifax trade, but her owners were induced to hazard the dangers of doubling Cape Horn, that they might have the first of the Sacramento trade, for which numerous steamers were preparing; and that they succeeded in doing so can be shown by a few figures, without getting into any very abstruse calculation. The evening I came down there were 137 passengers, at 32 dollars passage and bed, which is far below the number she might calculate on in the more advanced season; but averaging it at 130 all the year round, after subtracting 52 Sundays, and 13 days—the balance to 65—for repairs, &c., we have 300 working days, for which 130 passengers, at 32 dollars, gives a daily receipt of 4160 dollars, making a yearly aggregate of 1,248,000 dollars by passengers alone. Then there is the large freight with which she fills every up trip, and the rent of the bar and supper table, a something beyond belief. I could not get at the exact particulars, for obvious reasons; but this I was given to understand, that "the freight and rent fully covered all expenses," leaving the prodigious profit of one million and a quarter of dollars, or, in round numbers, 250,000*l.*, in one fleeting year. Talk of Cunard, Oriental, or Ocean lines if you will, but I verily believe their joint and aggregate yearly earnings would not amount to that of this single boat, plying on a river whose tranquil waters a year before had never been disturbed by any greater paddle than that of the Indian canoe.

Supper is an old and commonplace meal; but a supper on board the *Senator*—such a one as I witnessed—is not to be enjoyed every evening of one's life. I hope, therefore, the reader will bear with me, while describing the one in question. When the gong sounded, having a lame ankle, and not an over-keen appetite, I refrained from rushing into the tumultuous *mêlée* down the brass-shod stairway, waiting patiently to bring up the rear; but long before I reached the saloon, or imagined any portion of the party could be seated, a din of clamorous calls for coffee, chops, rolls, steward, *sarse lasses*, with a brisk rat-tattoo of cutlery, announced that "havoc" had been "cried;" and as I shouldered my way in I met many a gravy-stained plate *in transitu* for a fresh supply, and hot stewards with cold steaks, hurrying to stop the mouths of importunate passengers, showing me practically how *go-ahead* energy will carry a man *in medias res*, before its more polished prototype will have made the primary effort.

I happened to be placed beside a gentleman of vast abdominal capacity, as well as having for our *vis-à-vis* two others of large similar endowments, who did not permit a moment to escape them unprofitably, as the barrenness of the surrounding neighbourhood too convincingly attested; for while every other part of the table was covered with a mosaic coating of edibles, that which constituted our territory, like the tract within the radius of an upas-tree, was denuded, blighted, wasted—even the standing decorative dishes, with their curiously cut-paper embroidery, intended to last the season, vanished from the scene in the intervals betwixt order and supply; hot rolls being spirited away with the magic of Chinese jugglers, and a species of slim biscuit, into whose warm embrace I modestly inserted a bit of butter, were slipped, double crusted, into their mouths, like a dollar in a till slit, crowned with a lump of the same substance; stewards, with all the steam up, were waylaid as they hissed along, and eased of their burdens; and gentlemen above and below assailed with requests to "shove along" the butter, or the "sweetnin'." My uppermost feeling was ineffable disgust; but it rapidly gave way to one of utter amazement, as I saw the unabated demolition of sodden steak, and chops, and cutlets, shivering in congealed gravy. The table was nearly deserted before the two gentlemen on the opposition benches shut up, when I arose, from a feeling of shame lest the astounded stewards, who got concentrated into a group behind us, should suppose I was "any connexion of the person possessing such an inhuman attribute as the one that remained," who, as I retired, had placed before him the balance of a dish of chops, shaking in their gravy blanc-mange, which he affectionately pulled towards him with the eagerness of a new beginner:

The last cove at supper, left guzzling alone,
All his hungry companions were feasted and gone.

I regretted having left before the finale, and was spellbound at the head of the stairs, musing on miraculous maws and gastronomical giants, a full quarter of an hour before he came up, without any plethoric indication about him, looking as lank and pliant as an anchorite, with a brow as dry and unflushed as if he was only after rinsing out his mouth with cold water. I have seen some accomplished trenchermen in my time, but all comparisons I can call to mind are feeble and inadequate. I remember being present at Ascot Heath meeting as a spectator at an eating match, where the victor, in the full flush of conquest, offered to "eat any man in Britain for 100*l.*, and give him a sheep a week odds;" but he was a pettifogging nibbler compared with my supper companion. I never witnessed, or imagined, anything that would convey the remotest idea of his masticatory prowess. Even the remembrance of my boyish visit to Wombwell's menagerie, to see the lions devouring, does not recur to me in such amazing guise as his stupendous performance; leaving me to come to the conclusion that the engulphment of the goat, horns and all, by the boa constrictor, stands on the apex of abdominal triumphs, and that the next greatest achievement in that line was the gormandising on board the *Senator*.

CHAPTER XVI.

A Francisco Counting-house—A Ship converted into a land Dwelling—Makes more Money on shore than in her native Element—Marine Hotels and Boarding Houses—Magnificent View of the Bay of San Francisco—The immense Merchant Fleet in the Harbour—A melancholy Prospect—The Site of the Town—Its novel Appearance—Its picturesque Suburb—Shoalness of the Water along the Beach—Expense of discharging Vessels—Gradual filling up of the inner Harbour—Submarine lot Speculations—Floating Warehouses—Character of the Buildings—Style of the Shops—Hotels, their Rates and Accommodations—Taverns and their Varieties—Chinese Settlers—Their Habits—Gaming-houses and their various Attractions—The Vice on the Decline—Probable Causes—Anecdote—Motley Groups—Bowling Alleys and Cockpits—Want of Theatrical Taste—The Courts and the Judges—Court Practices—Desk Protectors—The Custom-house and its Officials—Bad Feeling towards the British—The Quarantine Laws—The Tax on Foreigners.

We arrived at our moorings before I awoke, and, finding a good breakfast ready, I partook of that meal on board, very few of the passengers remaining. On inquiring where my friend's (Mr. S——m's) office was located, I was told I could be landed at a stair-foot leading right to it; and was not a little surprised when pulled alongside a huge dismantled hulk, surrounded with a strong and spacious stage, connected with the street by a substantial wharf, to find the counting-house on the deck of the *Niantic*—a fine vessel of 1000 tons—no longer a buoyant ship, surmounted with lofty spars, and "streamers floating in the wind," but a mud-stuck tenement, covered with a shingle roof, subdivided into stores and offices, and painted over with the signs and showboards of the various occupants. To this "base use" my friend was obliged to convert her, rather than let her rot at anchor, there being no possibility then of getting a crew to send her to sea. Her hull was divided into two large warehouses, entered by spacious doorways on the sides, and her bulwarks raised upon about eight feet, affording a range of excellent offices on the deck, at the level of which a wide balcony was carried round, surmounted with a verandah, that was approached by a broad and handsome stairway. Both stores and offices found tenants at higher rents than tenements of similar dimensions on shore would command, returning a larger and steadier income, as my friend told me, than the ship would earn if afloat. Others were not slow in following his example, while those who could not get water lots to purchase, let out their ships, as they swung at anchor, as marine stores and boarding-houses.

The office of my friend stood aft, over where the cabin used to be, with windows in three sides, and, as I remarked to him, only suited a person of essentially mercantile mind, unleavened by the slightest tinge of poetry or romance, as none else could set down pouring over ponderous account-books, while his desk commanded a series of the most splendid views of nature and art that the pencil of the painter could find to delineate or create under the impulses of the most glowing imagination. On three sides lay spread out the glorious bay, its shores beautifully diversified with bold headlands, verdant promontories, and shaded inlets, where the streamlets, stealing down from the sloping hills, commingle with the blue waters of the Pacific; lofty mountain ranges, amongst which the aspiring crest of Mount Diavolo stands in towering pre-eminence, forming a grand and striking background, holding the bay and its contiguous shores in their embrace, like a large inland lake; the broad expanse of its rippled bosom charmingly relieved by the flitting course of small schooners and barges as they scudded and tacked across with snow-white sails, and the more stately progress of ships of large burden; while more immediately under the eye lay at anchor the immense fleet of merchantmen, comprising many of the finest ships in the world, in the midst of which might be discerned the lofty spars of two sloops of war, that took up their stations like a pair of stern marine monitors, presenting a most transcendently grand spectacle, but one overcast by the remembrance that those splendid vehicles of commerce were moored idly there, deserted, rotting under the influence of the weather, and checking the proud spirit of enterprise that steered them to those shores.

Outside, arising from the waters, is the picturesque island of Yerba Buena (Goat Island), with its beetling cliffs, about equidistant from each horn of the crescent, on which the infant city is built, and lies smiling with preternatural pretensions, setting at nought all antiquated rules and ideas of cosmopolitan progression, as it closely circles the curved shores, heaving up its swelling breast in the natural amphitheatre formed by the contiguous heights, the centre formed by the plaza or square, which constituted the old town in its entirety; branching off from which, in rectangular courses, run the modern additions, ascending the hill-sides in handsome rows, until they reach the transverse terraces on the steeper acclivities, while on the north and south sides, two natural openings between the hills, pleasingly graduated, invite extension, leading to the beach above and below each point of the crescent, where harbours almost equal to the principal one exist, giving scope sufficient for all improvements that may be projected for years to come. Already skeleton avenues are stretching out in those directions; and also, creeping around the shores towards those wings of the city, which will soon be full fledged, and spread out in commercial activity, several fanciful villas, lightsome cottages, and pretty tents are perched upon the steep brows around, looking like so many aërial visitants, peering about for a vacant spot to descend and settle on; and, above all, on the loftiest eminence stands the telegraph with outstretched arms, as if beckoning the whole human family to hurry forward and locate.

There is one great drawback to the harbour in the shoalness of the water around its rim, which prevents vessels from approaching within a mile of a landing; while the expenses of discharging by means of scows, or flat-bottomed boats, from the enormous rates of labour, involves an outlay tantamount to the freight. To obviate this, some very long and substantial piers have been lately constructed, extending out a great distance, but still far short of the deep water, only affording accommodation for small craft; but their continuation to that point is contemplated, and will certainly be soon carried into effect, from the assurance they hold out of yielding enormous incomes to the proprietors. The space within the area of the crescent is (I am informed by an officer of the port) fast filling up, the mud raised by the dragging of the anchors outside being carried in by the eddies of the tide, rendering it more than probable that in the process of time the beach line will run straight from horn to horn; indeed, so steadily is this natural operation going on, speculators have not hesitated purchasing at extravagant terms submarine building lots, not even bare at low water, requiring buoys to mark out the area of their prospective properties. Intercourse between the shipping and town is so costly and inconvenient, that judiciously-assorted shops, constructed on lighters, ply amongst the fleet, to supply those various wants that it would not be worth while to go ashore for at the expense of two dollars. They form a novel spectacle to the eye of the stranger, but a very vexatious object to those aquatic extortioners the ferrymen, whose insolence and rapacity throws entirely into the shade the accomplishments of the jolly young watermen of the Tower Stairs or old Wapping.

The houses of the city are principally of wood, though some handsome brick ones have lately been erected, as well as a few iron ones, and some—fewer still—of stones taken off the coral reefs at the Sandwich Islands; but the great scarcity of lime causes timber to be the great building staple. The streets are regularly laid out, occupied, as might be expected, exclusively with warehouses and shops; some amongst which were arrayed with the most attractive varieties of fancy goods, splendid shawls and scarfs, neat bonnets, lively dress patterns, and delicious little corsets, ingeniously arranged on stands and lines, in the spacious windows with a skill worthy of a London artist, where that branch of business has almost attained the rank of a science. As yet, those emporiums are driving but a slender trade as compared with the other bustling marts; but every arrival augments the *softer* sex, whose increase will serve to correct and abate many of the social evils of the city, and diversify its busy throng, who plunge from the excitement of business to that of vice, in the absence of any domestic attractions.

Hotels are numerous, but mediocre at best; varying in their comforts and charges very considerably. At the St. Francis you get good fare and the luxury of sheets at the rate of seven dollars per day, the others sliding down to twenty-one dollars per week, simplifying the fare in a proportionate ratio, and consigning you to repose in a narrow brunk, on a shavings mattress, betwixt a pair of bearded blankets, that can scarcely be included in the category of woollen manufactures; the titillation of which, superadded to the voracity of the Californian fleas, are more than a match for any amount of patience or lassitude. There are houses of refreshment at every turn—the American Tavern, the French Réstaurant, the Spanish Fonday, and the Chinese Chow-Chow. But amidst the host of competitors the Celestials carry off the palm for superior excellence in every particular. They serve everything promptly, cleanly, hot, and well cooked; they give dishes peculiar to each nation, over and above their own peculiar soups, curries, and ragouts, which cannot be even imitated elsewhere; and such is their quickness and civil attention, they anticipate your wants, and secure your patronage.

There are great numbers of Chinese in California, most of whom settle in the cities, partially adopting the prevailing costume, constituting a very useful class of men, quick in acquiring a proficiency in the duties required of them, industrious, and persevering in attending to it; they are systematic, sober, and cleanly, and when treated with proper kindness and indulgence, become attached and interested. They, above all others, appear successful in finding employment; for you never see a Chinese lolling about, or amongst the groups of idlers, content, as I believe, with more moderate wages, and unconnected with the confederate gangs, who laugh contemptuously at an offer far exceeding a colonel's pay. They soon become possessed of means, from the simplicity of their habits and economy of their domestic *ménage*, and do not hesitate to share it in establishing their countrymen, who generally leave their fatherland without any other resources than their brains and sinews—a trait of character that usually affords a guarantee for other commendable attributes. The Americans seek assiduously to inspire them with a hatred of the British, by reprobating, in terms of affected indignation, "their wanton cruelty during their unjust war;" avowing sympathies of the tenderest complexion. But those relatives of the sun and moon do not appear prone to retrospective reflections; present prospects and future anticipations more profitably and pleasingly occupying their minds.

From my experience in Sacramento, I was quite prepared for the number and style of the gaming-houses, which invariably occupy the most prominent sites; and lest their conspicuous exteriors should fail to attract the eye, a crash of music issues from their capacious portals and balconies that is certain to arrest the ear. Some of them have really fine bands, as they spare no expense in securing the best musicians; and I am fully persuaded the charm of sweet sounds entices many abhorrers of the vice to enter who would never otherwise have overstepped their thresholds; but when once the rubicon of temptation is crossed, and the turrets of gold and silver with which the tables are heaped, glitter, as they are pushed about from hand to hand, on the turn of a card or the destiny of a ball, the dazzled vision vanquishes all virtuous resolves, tinges the acquisitive senses,

> And those who came to scoff remain to *play*.

Gaming is followed, in Francisco, with a spirit accordant with its pre-eminence above the other cities of California, (standing in about the same degree of comparison with the profession in Sacramento as the grand houses of aristocratic resort in St. James's and Albemarle-street do with the silver hells in the purlieus of Leicester-square.) They are never closed, morning, noon, or night. Dealers and presidents succeed each other; and as yawning crowds disperse at daybreak, new victims rush from their beds to the sacrifice, so that there is no intermission, the only difference being that the evening attendance is the greatest and most adventurous. There are various games, adapted for every prejudice or caprice; but "the game" is monte. It is on this that all large investments are made, and which leviathan gamblers patronise. I was present myself on one occasion when a gentleman lost 6000 dollars at three stakes. It is, however, remarked, by those qualified to enunciate statistically, that while the numbers who resort to those rendezvous are undiminished, the amounts played for are fast dwindling in magnitude—a consequence not to be wondered at, for communities, no more than bodies corporeal, can bear up against bleeding beyond a certain point without having syncope to ensue; and some conception of the drainage may be formed, when one establishment, the El Dorado, can afford to pay a rent of 6000 dollars per month, independent of taxes and expenses, enabling its proprietors to indulge in the most expensive style of living, and to set aside enormous sums for other speculative investments.

There are capacious refreshment-counters in all those saloons, plentifully supplied, but with a greater and more tempting variety of fluids than edibles—a very natural arrangement, no doubt, where excitement is the great aim, but leading occasionally to the maddened despair of a victim's revenge, to guard against which each table is provided with its secret armory, which is used without hesitation or remorse in the event of a row. I saw, at the Eagle Saloon, in Montgomery-street, a monte dealer deliberately draw a pistol from beneath the cloth, and shoot a young lad, who was, I believe, honestly scuffling for his stake; and then, with the most perfect *sang froid*, call the coroner, whom he recognised amongst the bystanders, to hold an inquest, which actually took place on the spot where the bloody deed was committed, in presence of the murderer, a volunteer jury of pals returning a verdict of "accidental death" almost before the last throb of pulsation had beaten; and as the body, still warm with animal heat, was being removed, the blood-stained villain audaciously resumed his position at his infernal altar, surrounded by an inhuman crowd, who pressed forward to the game, nowise restrained by the consciousness that they were standing in the undried gore of a fellow-creature. Ladies may sometimes be seen presiding over the game, exerting their insinuating blandishments to charm the "nice young men" to their ruin; and every table is attended by a set of accomplices, or "bonnets," who stake their money on the right cards, and move away with large sums, to make room for the eager dupes behind them. There is scarcely a country on the face of the globe that has not a delegate in those dens—Russians, Swiss, French, Swedes, Spaniards, Italians, Greeks, Turks, Jews, Chinese, Hindostanees, Niggers, Yankees, Indians, English, Scotch, Malays, and some of the real *ould* ancient Milesian stock, no longer "hereditary bondsmen," but

Thumping, lumping, tearing, swearing,
Ranting, roaring Irishmen,

presenting a motley group, that could not be equalled in any of the capitals of the oldest empires.

Bowling alleys also come in for a respectable share of public patronage. And a new and successful mode of *divarting* the public is in operation, under the auspices of a rollicking Emeralder, in the shape of a cock-pit, which seems to take amazingly, and pay proportionably as over and above the admission fee of twenty-five cents; the *pull* in knowing the respective merits *and chances* of the birds must be a source of large income, round sums being staked on the issue of every battle; while, as Mr. M'Cluskey jocularly informed me, "he was at no cost for an *orkisthre*, as the crowing of the *darlints* was worth all the money;" and, I must say, challenged public attention with signal effect. Theatricals were attempted, but soon expired of inanition, as will every other attempt at public recreation that is not highly seasoned with gambling incentives, so deeply is that vice rooted in the community.

Persons above all temptation, who find time hanging heavily on their hands, can beguile an hour or two in the different law courts, where justice is administered in a manner that comes home to the meanest capacity, divested of all that stupid etiquette and solemn decorum, so irksome according to British discipline. Judges there sit on the bench, attired like other men, and taking a leaf out of Chief Baron Nicholson's book, puff their cigars while laying down the law on the enlightened principle of "ex fumo, dare lucem;" nor do they haughtily hesitate to accommodate with the glowing butt any of the learned counsel or audience who may require a light; in fact, there is a degree of charming republican familiarity existing betwixt the bench, the bar, and the public, which makes a man feel as much at ease in court as in a tavern, and must be seen to be properly appreciated. Law arguments under such a system are no longer dry and uninteresting, but flow smoothly along, liberally lubricated with tobacco saliva, and garnished with colloquial episodes that come with a delicious freshness upon the ear of a person before only accustomed to the oppressive profundity of Westminster practice.* I was being thus edified, sitting in the jury-box (no jury being empannelled at the time), where I observed a row of new pine sticks, about the dimensions of a shillelah, standing in exact order in front of the seats; and finding their number amounting precisely to twelve, it struck me they were part of the legal machinery of the place; nor was I astray, for a sort of factotum—crier, usher, tipstaff, &c.,—who wore his hat *ex officio*, commiseratingly informed me they were "desk protectors," which it was part of his duty as court-keeper to provide as "whittling stuff for the gents," who would otherwise cut all sorts of hieroglyphics and incongruous devices upon the desks; an operation I afterwards saw gone through by a witness under the ordeal of a sharp cross-examination, who cut with an increasing keenness into the rail as the counsel cut into his credibility.

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* *Judge*: "Holloa, Mr. Taper! I spose you come here to realise the price of them ar pants," slapping the nether tegument on his legs, which described two sides of a triangle in the desk; "but afore I stumps up, it would tickle me to know on what mathematical rule you cut them out."

Mr. Taper: "Well, I reckon it would be considerable of a kurious rule as would apply to your equeer posters."

Facetious Counsel: "I humbly move we make it a rule of court."

Judge. "Mr. Proser, go on." Argument resumed.

The custom-house department is only remarkable for the insolence of the officials, and the arbitrary demeanour of the autocratic collector, who, like a late Irish judge of punning celebrity, sticks it on with a vengeance if parties before his tribunal betray the slightest emotion or discontent as their invoices are assessed;[*] taking, as it appeared to me, a peculiar delight in throwing stumbling-blocks in the path of Englishmen, and confiscating British property without any embarrassing investigations. In connexion with this department we have the board of health, actuated by a similar anti-British spirit, and using the quarantine laws to gratify it in a manner degrading to humanity, stretching them cruelly when a poor tempest-tossed British emigrant comes within their jurisdiction,

[*] Lately, business goes on more methodically and legally, since California has been admitted into the Union.

who, though dried up with sea-sickness, scurvy, and short ship's allowance, need plead for no indulgence, no mercy, if there exist the flimsiest excuse for prolonging his misery.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Post-office—Slow Process of sorting—Eagerness for Intelligence—*Letterary* Speculators—Rules of Approach—Scenes on Mail Deliveries—Jokes and Tricks—Amusing Occurrence—Effect of the System of changing Officials in the States—Houses of Worship—Their thin Congregations—Divine Service interrupted by the Bands of the Gambling-houses—Anomalous Progress of Vice in Francisco—It tinges Mercantile Integrity—Case in Point—A woeful Disappointment—Lot Property in San Francisco—Invisible Suburbs—The Future of the City—Influx brings down Wages and favours small Capitalists—Indications of a Bachelor—Disproportion of the Sexes—Its probable Consequences—Auctioneers *versus* Wholesale Merchants—Value of Money in California—Disagreeabilities of Francisco—The Climate provocative of pulmonary Ailments—The Markets—Number of Daily Papers—The old Spanish Presidio and Fort—The Entrance of the Harbour—Washerwoman's Bay—Sansolito—De los Angelos—Its picturesque Position—Advice to Emigrants—A little plain Reasoning—A simple Calculation.

It is a rare treat for a stranger to watch the proceedings about the post-office, after the arrival of a mail steamer; and one that neglects the opportunity, throws away a chance of seeing fun and novelty that he cannot make up for elsewhere. As soon as the mail-bags go ashore, all public communication with the establishment is shut out for four-and-twenty hours—sometimes much longer, if the mail is a large one—a period in which those unapproachable officials might not only sort the letters, but con over their contents. During this interregnum, you cannot even post foreign letters, as you can find no one to whom you can pay the postage—a necessary preliminary to their transit. On the evening previous to the completion of the job, notices are affixed inside the different windows, announcing the hour at which the delivery will commence on the ensuing morning, and such is the extravagant desire to obtain the earliest news, that there is a class of men who derive a comfortable livelihood by securing and selling the places most contiguous to the windows. You will find those "*letterary*" speculators taking up their stations at midnight on little canvas stools, with their stock of cigars, and provisions laid in for the siege, sitting in close column, as the inexorable rule is, that all applicants must be served in rotation.

The earliest dawn brings to the ranks those who prefer a little suffering to a little expenditure, every moment adding new recruits, until the lines become so elongated that the rear extends into remote streets. The march is so slow, parties come prepared with newspapers and magazines to wile away the time; and cafés, rigged upon hand-carts, move along, dealing out hot coffee, juleps, and sangarees; for if you leave the ranks under any necessity, you must fall in behind. A peripatetic grog-shop is also in attendance, in the person of a huge hirsute Frenchman, with a keg of brandy slung over one shoulder, so as to come conveniently into the embrace of the opposite arm for filling up the different potatory utensils that dangle from his jacket buttons. The crawling nature of the progress not unfrequently superinduces drowsiness, and sometimes, when a somnolescent gentleman happens to get a comfortable *lean*, yielding to the pleasing influence, he neglects to close up, when he is passed by and shut out—technically, "caught napping,"—to the infinite mirth of the multitude, who poke fun at him, as he retires without the latest intelligence. Tradition informs us, that in the early, primitive days of San Francisco, it sometimes occurred that people, bowed down as if with sickness, crawled upon crutches, imploring the fortunate leaders of the forlorn hope to waive their privilege for the moment in favour of them "unfortunate cripples," who, like the infirm cardinal that stood up erect so soon as he got hold of the keys of St. Peter within his clutch, became miraculously stalwart the moment they became possessed of their letters; thus rendering the present generation uncharitably sceptical, and exploding the dodge. I came in for rather a laughable scene, in which the principal actor was a tight lad from my own province, who, when his turn came, demanded, in a loud tone,

"Are thir any letthers from my father in Ireland, inside?"

"Sam, may I be —— if the kurosity nailed to the post must not be for this *critter*. I say, Pat, I believe thar's summut for you here. Would you take atall figure for it?"

"For the matther o' that, the hole's rather small to make a bargain through; but if you come out here in the afthernune, instead of takin anything I will be afthir giving you such a lambæstin, that all the *soretin* clerks, in there wouldn't be able to make out yer direckshuns."

"Keep your temper, Paddy; here's a line from your guvnor; no other man's father could direct a letter 'to my Sun in Kaleyfornia,' but yours."

"D'ye hear me, you strate-haired scamp," retorted Pat; "there's never a pair of pistol-shinned Yankees, wayned on traycle an' Indaay mail, that the same ould chap and I wouldn't knock saucepans out of;" (and, moving off with his epistle) "so, hooray for ould Ireland, and the sky over it! barrin the praty rot; and where's the dirty, snufflin' spalpeen that daar say black's the white o' my eye, for" (in the distance)

"I'm a rantin', rovin' blade,
Of the devil a thing was I ever afraid!"

It may be supposed by some of my readers that I am drawing a long bow about this department; but I beg solemnly to assure the incredulous that I am far within the actual limits, and positively deficient in many of the strange and eccentric details. The crush continues for two days, and very often occupies a spell of the third, the clumsiness and delay arising from one of the boasted usages of the "great enlightened republic;" according to which, every new president turns all public departments inside out, displacing men just long enough in harness to know their business, to make room for his own partisans, green hands, who assume office without any aptitude, and proceed to learn their duties without a preceptor.*

There are numerous houses of worship in the city, but none of them externally distinguishable as such save the Roman Catholic chapel—a new frame building of capacious dimensions—erected on an eminence, which makes it quite a feature of the city. It is to be regretted, however, that their influence is exceedingly circumscribed, if any inference can be deduced from the limited attendance; for while their congregations are so lamentably thin, the dens of iniquity, the gaming-houses, are crammed to suffocation; the sacrilegious din of their crashing bands rending the solemn stillness of the Sabbath, penetrating to the shrine of worship even during the hour of prayer —the rampant bleatings of the golden calf drowning the mild tones of Christian piety.

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* On my return from the Sandwich Islands, some approach to despatch had been made by having a wing of the office with numbered boxes, one of which every permanent resident rented.

The world's progress furnishes no parallel for the precocious depravity of San Francisco. The virgin soil of a new settlement did not use to be a garden for vice and evil. There it was the kindly philanthropist looked to find the ruddy virtues blooming in a kindred clay in an uncontaminated atmosphere, fading and sickening only in the tedious revolution of time, as moral culture degenerated into voluptuous lethargy, accumulated wealth morbidly craving the incentives of luxury, and enervating enjoyments supplanting the healthy exercise of enterprise, when, with drooping heads and shrivelled stems, they shrank into decay, choked by the rank weeds of artificial society. But in Francisco a new and anomalous phase has arisen; the infant phenomenon exhibiting the tokens of senility in its cradle, with the gangrene of vicious indulgence staining its soft cheek before it is well emancipated from its swaddling-clothes—symptoms altogether incompatible with the sanguine anticipations which predicate for it the proudest position amongst all the cities within the vast bay of oceans between the Capes of Horn and Good Hope.

In Francisco nothing is natural—everything is forced;

it is a hotbed where all pursuits are stimulated by the fierce fire of one predominant lust. Trade or business is not embarked in there to be the honourable occupation of a lifetime; professions are not solely followed to secure a permanent practice and social elevation; men engage in both the one and the other to build up fortunes in a hurry with whatever materials they can grasp, to win a large stake by any means and then withdraw, confounding the tactics of the gambler with the zealous integrity of the merchant, until conscience is left without a corner to hide in, and even common decency is obliged to pick her steps through the mire. I was furnished with a good illustrative instance in the case of a gentleman of my acquaintance from Adelaide, South Australia, who came up from the colonies with a large venture, and an introduction to a *first-rate* house, to whom he handed his invoices, to have them arranged according to a certain form prescribed by the customs authorities.

As one of the firm ran his eye over them, he exclaimed, "Why, as I live, you have put down the several articles at their full cost prices!" "Certainly," replied Mr. B——d; "you could not suppose me capable of swearing to a lie to save a few dollars' duty?" "Well, Sir," said this *respectable* merchant, "if that's your style of doing business, I guess you'll never dig a fortune amongst us." In like manner, houses claiming the appellation of respectability, put out their characters to fructify by patronising any scheme or project that promises to lead to profit, duping poor emigrants, who were wont to regard reputation as a guarantee, by selling them, with every solemnity of asseveration, lots in their flourishing newspaper cities; the poor pigeon going his way rejoicing, on the strength of their assurances, in quest of his property, and only having the film removed from his eyes on inquiring, after a toilsome journey, at some tattered tents, "How far off is the city ?" when he is informed to his dismay that he is standing in the centre of the capital.

Lot property, in and about Francisco, is, and will continue for some time, to be valuable and in demand, from the unceasing stream of emigration, both by sea and land, one-fourth of whom either stay in or return to the city; and as there are no such things as empty houses or untenanted stores, those who come with an intention of starting in business have no alternative but to purchase a lot and erect a tenement; so that, I repeat, lot property contiguous to the city is for the present an improving investment; but I wish to emphasize contiguous, because surveys and allotments have been made out to ridiculously remote points, that cannot possibly come into occupation if ever, for a number of years; for you will meet, as you travel towards the city, miles from its turmoil, posts surmounted with boards, that wayfarers approach to learn the distance, but find them headed with the names of streets, and notifications "that the adjoining valuable lots are for sale"—causing the bewildered stranger to strain his optics in search of the outlines of a town, impressed, as he proceeds, with amazement, and vague notions of earthquakes and such like vagaries of nature.

But I cannot refrain from expressing my opinion—the question of title apart—that the present extravagant value of property in Francisco cannot continue to be long sustained, because commerce and business, which are its life and soul, are on an unsound and fictitious basis, that must be revolutionised to become stable and permanent. The standard of property is relatively regulated by the profits of trade, and as those profits become necessarily depressed as the vast appliances of steam open fresh facilities for intercourse and transit, its value must subside in a like ratio. No sane man could put faith in the continuance of a system having to bear up against the feverish pulse of a money-market beating at an average of eight per cent. per month, against rents five hundred per cent. above those of New York or London, against wages and salaries equally exorbitant, with an exhausting domestic expenditure, despite of the most self-denying economy, and without the guarantee of insurance to cover the ruinous risks of the place from fire.

Besides, regarding it in another light, how is it possible that a city, claiming to contain 50,000 inhabitants, can be supported in its present career by so scant a population as that California is said to contain, which, according to an average of the very best estimates, does not exceed 200,000, cities, diggings, ranches, and all; an amount, too, that is gradually on the decrease, as the placer diggings—which alone can be worked by individual energy and labour—are giving evidences of exhaustion; results that will steadily progress until the mining operations of the country are concentrated in a few large associated companies, constrainedly employing machinery instead of manual labour in stamping and grinding the quartz, amalgamations, &c., &c., to the consequent diminution of the population, who have not the attraction of agricultural resources to induce them to settle in the country; for it is a notorious fact, borne out by experience, that not one out of every hundred emigrants either start with the intention of permanent settlement, or see reason to change their minds after a season's residence in the country.

There is a constantly shifting population, the one coming with the determination of working hard, and saving rapidly for home enjoyment, the other returning with the fruits of their labour and economy. At first the flood was the stronger, but latterly the ebb tide is the more impetuous, carrying along with each receding wave a portion of the sandy foundation on which this marvellous city has been built.

San Francisco, to be upheld in its present overweening pretensions, would require a thriving population of at least a couple of million at its back.

The steady influx of emigrants has assisted the sale of property in another way, by bringing down labourers and mechanics' wages to somewhat of a rational standard, enabling the smaller class of capitalists to make efforts that before would have been impracticable. Smiths and carpenters, who six months previously would have grumbled at one ounce per day, came to be contented with eight dollars; good labourers, being anxious to secure steady employment, at four dollars; the only branches of labour that remained unabated when I left were washing and fine needlework. Owing to the disproportionate number of female settlers, you rarely see a gentleman using a hemmed kerchief, and when you do, you may set it down as a sign that he has some "friends in heaven" who have provided him with a helpmate; nor is it an unfrequent habit for persons to throw away their shirts and stockings when they become soiled, bad washing costing six dollars per dozen, taking the big pieces with the small, while good new shirts, ready made up, can be bought at ten dollars per dozen, and stockings at four dollars; a figure low for such a market, but consequent upon the amazing stocks of such goods with which it was glutted in the first burst of speculation. However, I am inclined to suspect, like the cards in fashionable clubs, those articles, after a little manipulation, find their way back to the shelves of the shopmen, which tends to keep up the stock and depress the price. But the number of the fair sex is sensibly on the increase, perhaps from this state of things (which I do not assign from any feelings of disrespect to the ladies, but as the natural result of cause and effect), that, up to this, seven-eighths of the emigrants were unmarried men, generally about the age when ideas of connubial felicity obtrude themselves on the imagination; so that I do not conceive it beyond the range of legitimate conjecture to suppose that the diminishing numbers of young men at home would encourage family emigration on a large scale, by stimulating that very laudable ambition, so universal amongst prudent mammas, of having their daughters comfortably provided for.

The wholesale trade in Francisco appears to rest upon a very unsound foundation; for though there are several extensive establishments of the kind, shippers—who, in very many cases, come out as their own supercargoes—rather than encounter the awful charges and drawbacks of consignment, take their goods from the ship's side to one of the numerous auction marts with which the city abounds, where all the retailers supply themselves, unless in immediate want of an article which does not appear in any of the auction catalogues of the day, when alone they resort to the store of the regular wholesale merchant.

"Auction watching" there is quite a business in itself, a large class of men exclusively devoting their time to attending those sales, and generally standing well with the man who wields the hammer, and helps them to the lion's share of good bargains, which are for the most part to be had, with periodical certainty, after the monthly remittances, when dust is not overabundant, and money sometimes raises to the startling rate of ten and twelve per cent. per month on the best bills. During my stay in California, I have never known discounts lower than seven per cent. per month on bills and notes of hand, while on mortgage I have known as high as twenty-five per cent. to be obtained; and as much as fifteen per cent. can always be easily had, most amply secured on the best property in the place; so that business profits and professional emoluments may be permitted to reach a very lofty range without exciting "our especial wonder."

There are two great objections to Francisco as a mere place of residence; one of which may be removed in course of time, but the other, and most serious one, must abide for ever—I allude to the offensive and disgusting odours which pervade the atmosphere, owing to the surface drainage, as all the impurities of the city are carried off by gutters, only partially covered where they cross a thoroughfare; but this, no doubt, will be better arranged when the municipal government is thoroughly established and organised.[*] But the quick daily transitions of temperature in the climate is above human control or amendment, and must evermore render it disagreeable to the more robust, and excessively unhealthy to those of delicate constitutions; for even during the warmest of the summer months, while up to twelve and one o'clock the heat is so oppressive that the lightest possible garments are an incumbrance, you will be obliged for the remainder of the day to muffle up in Kamschatcan attire, and belay your hat with a stout rope, if you care for its safety, as a regular gale sets in, continuing till night, carrying with it a drift of sand from the surrounding hills and from off the streets, which inflames the eyes, pangs the ears, grits down the back; but, worst of all, finds its way into the lungs, forming granulations there that produce irritating coughs, and most generally ripen into tubercles, ending in pulmonary consumption. Fever and ague, of a very virulent type, also prevail to a great extent, and acute rheumatic ailments, growing out of the habit of living in those pile tenements, which are so carelessly constructed that the exhalations from the damp underneath can permeate through the ill-joined floors, and imbue the air of the whole establishment. The dreary winter season, which pours down its deluge of sleets and rains, is the healthier of all; because the weather, not being so subject to sudden daily caprice, enables the people to clothe in the morning in a costume that suits throughout the day; whereas in other seasons, though a change is necessary, business or indifference prevent its being made, thus laying a foundation for ill health.

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[*] At my late visit I found regular sewers in process of formation, several having been already opened, perfectly sufficient to drain all the nuisances; besides which improvements, brick houses had become more numerous since the destructive fires, and plank roads laid down in all the leading streets.

Good water is abundant, and, though there are no regular markets, all the necessaries of life can be conveniently obtained. Excellent bread is made throughout the city, and prime beef can always be had at moderate rates; but the mutton is wretched, only fit to be used in harricoes or pies. Fish is a rarity, although the bay and rivers abound with an extensive variety of the best description. Venison is quite a cheap and ordinary dish, and even bear meat frequently figures on the *rôle* of the tavern's *carte*. I have been more than once amused on entering a *restaurant*, to hear a waiter communicating his order to the kitchen, shouting, in double bass, "One roast bear for No. 9;" next moment, "Two *rare* roast bears for No. 6; an *outside* roast bear for No. 3;" giving one the idea there were a drove of those animals in a huge bakehouse, ready to be trotted out on the shortest notice.

There are five daily papers in Francisco, all seemingly well supported and cleverly conducted, each labouring strenuously to establish their various creeds of American politics; in which they have so far succeeded that at every pettifogging election, even of the lowest official, every party spell is evoked, and all the rancour of polical spleen is stirred up into full ferment.

About two miles westward of the city, beyond the hills, is rather a fertile strip of land, stretching along the coast of the bay; towards the entrance, at the end next the city, there is a small fresh-water lake, round which a little colony of washerwomen have planted themselves, and a right good location it is for the business, as the water is soft and detergent, and the margin is girthed with a thorny scrubwood, which answers admirably for drying. When first seen from the hill-top it forms a unique feature in the landscape, sufficiently imposing to confer a name on the cove of the bay adjoining it, which is laid down in the map as Washerwoman's Bay. There has been some garden cultivation commenced in the same locality; the little streams that trickle down towards the lake affording means of irrigation, and giving promise of crops, at the time of my visit, that would lead, I should think, to the occupation of all the available land about for green vegetables, which were then a perfect treat, and commanded a most arbitrary price.

At the other end of the narrow plain stands the old Spanish presidio and landing, which is occupied by a few American soldiers, and used as a depôt for military stores. The landing is a bad one, situated on a flat unprotected beach, and long since altogether abandoned as such. About a mile further seaward is the old fort, standing on a bold projecting point, which, with Punto Diablo on the opposite shore, forms the throat of the harbour Chrysopylæ as it is called—a short mile in width, with deep water close into each shore, and no hidden danger or obstacle to obstruct navigation, almost superseding the necessity of pilotage. There were a few paltry remains of Spanish fortification about the fort, on which the Americans have improved, and planted some guns, round the inside of the headland, on the northern side of the entrance, of which Punto Diablo is the extreme tongue. There is a nice sheltered little harbour, called Sausolito, where ships come to, when there is not sufficient wind to enable them to stem the ebb tide; and vessels outward-bound frequently call for water, as it is particularly good; and if the voyage is a long one, a considerable saving can be effected, ships' water at the city being four cents per gallon. A settlement has been long since formed here by a Captain Richardson, who owns the entire saddle of good land that rides betwixt the high hips of the coast range there. He is so jealous of neighbourhood or encroachment, that he cannot be induced to let or sell any portion of his possessions, although he does not nearly use or occupy the extent of his territory, which is called Plaza de los Carallos.

Opposite the Bay of Sansolito, in a north-easterly direction, lies the island of De los Angelos, much the largest in the Bay of San Francisco. Its shores are bold around, but on the south and west rise abruptly to a giddy height. It is covered with fine pasture, possesses good water, and a sufficiency of firewood; but as yet has not tempted a wooer to its angelic embrace. Were I to remain in California, I should choose it as my head-quarters, for, over and above the properties I have mentioned, its picturesque situation is pre-eminently attractive, reposing under the shelter of the coast range, and commanding a most expansive view of the bay; from its south-east cliffs you see through the gullet of the harbour the undulating bosom of the broad Pacific; immediately opposite, the more elevated terraces of the city sweetly challenges the view; and beyond its jutting extremes the southern section of the bay stretches beyond the limits of vision, to receive the waters of the Santa Clara, on which stands the embarcadero of the capital of San José; while towards the northward is discernible the great entrance to the Strait of Carquines, with the city of Benicio on its shores—a sort of aquatic Temple-bar, where vessels, boats, and barges are jostling against each other as they pass and repass in crowded throngs through this narrow thoroughfare.

Before leaving Francisco, I would give a word of advice to emigrants—advice founded on my own personal experience, observation, and inquiry, especially intended for tradesmen and mechanics, who, in the chagrin of disappointment at finding a somewhat abated scale of wages, spurn excellent offers, and start off to the mines, where they find matters still more vexatiously at variance with the gilded narratives that wheedled them from their comfortable homes. Before yielding to hasty impulse, let them collate and compare remuneration and expenditure with those items at home, and they will be constrained to admit that industry and skill are still splendidly rewarded in San Francisco, notwithstanding the diminution of wages. If wages have become more moderate, so also has the cost of living, each still bearing their relative proportions; when one was excessively high, the other was similarly exorbitant; now both have subsided, yet income and expenditure have not approximated uncomfortably. There is still an ample margin, for a man not addicted to gaming and drinking, to augment a reserve fund, should he be disposed to found one, without abandoning his accustomed pursuits or rushing blindly to shatter his constitution, and return bowed down by sickness, without gains enough to defray the expenses that must accrue before restored health enables him to seek employment.

The labourer, who all his life has been accustomed to hard toil and exposure, whose frame has been case-hardened by snows and sunshine, whose constitution will not shrink under the vicissitudes of diet and climate, is the proper manner of man for a miner. He has shivered the rock in the quarry at home,—he can do the same in California; he has worked in mud and water digging the canal in his native state, and can endure wet feet in the vocation of a gold-digger. He was never over-daintily ministered to in food, nor does he pine at the rough fare of the mines. But take the carpenter from behind his dry bench, the smith from his warm forge, or the spruce clerk from his high stool, and place them in cold water, with a red-hot sun glaring down upon them,—let them strain every muscle in this novel sphere of labour, rough it on hard bread and salt junk, seeking repose on the damp earth, and, believe me, they will soon exhibit the sad effects of so radical a change.

Besides, steady employment about the different cities will enable a man to enjoy more comforts, and save more money than he can as a general thing by the precarious income of the diggings. The average daily income of miners, embracing all the diggings, has been computed, by persons in a position to make the calculation, at eight dollars; which, from my own observation, taking good mines and bad, energetic men and slothful, good workmen and those unused to toil, I consider tolerably near the mark. Let me next see the number of days this income can be reckoned on: we first subtract fifty-two Sundays, and at least ninety-one days for the winter and high-water season, making together one hundred and forty-three days; those from three hundred and sixty-five leave two hundred and twenty-two days, or within a fraction of thirty-two weeks; then all miners allow at the rate of one day in the week for prospecting, seeking new ground, which leaves a residue of one hundred and ninety working days; from which I might, and should, deduct largely for sickness and other contingencies; but admitting one hundred and ninety days as the yearly average at 8 dollars per day, it yields a total of 1520 dollars, showing that something over 4 dollars per day for the year round is the miner's income. Let the mechanic or clerk, in following this calculation, also bear in mind, that while he in Francisco or Sacramento lays in his necessaries at reasonable rates, the miner has to submit to the most usurious exactions; and, after a little sober reflection, I conceive he will come into my view of the matter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Change my Mind about visiting the San Joaquim Valley—Reasons for so doing—Prevailing Character of the Country—Rice growing there profitable or not—Wild Horses in the Valley—Rare pictures of Animated Nature—Colonel Fremont's Description of the Valley—Quartz stratifications about the Mariposas District—Dr. Marsh's Opinion of the Valley.

I ORIGINALLY intended proceeding from San Francisco down the Valley of the San Joaquim, and visiting the southern as well as the northern mines; but from the various descriptions I received from several intelligent parties, who worked in and travelled through them, there was so perfect a similarity in the character of the diggings, the returns, the *habitans*, and goings on there, I thought there would be nothing of novelty or interest to repay me for the journey; nor was there any variety in the aspect of the country or scenery to attract the tourist who had already travelled through the Valley of the Sacramento.

The San Joaquim valley is largely composed of tule marshes and low sedgy swamps, so subject to overflow and lodgment they cannot well be turned to profitable account, except it be in the cultivation of rice, in which employment, I understand, there are some parties at present engaged; and though I have no doubt as to its growing freely, and yielding large crops of good quality, yet, from the very low rates at which it is imported from several of the islands of the Eastern Archipelago, where land and labour are to be had for a mere song, I cannot be brought to believe it will ever become a remunerative species of husbandry, even though "*gone into*" by sheer Yankees. Three cents per pound is the price at the time I write, and I find the averages of the markets have been fully as low as in South Carolina, where it is one of the prime products.

In the higher, or more rolling districts as they are termed, the soil is good—not to be excelled for richness by the most favoured portions of the Sacramento valley—and some of the best locations have been settled; but, beyond stock raising, the only cultivation that has been attempted is that of the vine, which, from many samples of the grape I have seen, bids fair to be rewarded with success, in so far as the character of the fruit is concerned. But though the juice may be peculiarly vinous, I apprehend a generation must pass away before any profit can be extracted from the purple clusters; lacking which, in these degenerate days, the most delightful or utilitarian avocations speedily languish and cease to interest.

The herds of wild horses is a feature peculiar to this valley. They are of a splendid breed, and up to this period have been suffered to increase and multiply without interference or molestation, as the rancheros raise their own stock, and prefer the trouble of rearing and training them to the bother and danger of catching and taming the fiery quadruped of nature's nurturing. I have heard several glowing descriptions of them, as they come proudly careering about a band of travellers, with flowing manes and streaming tails, sweeping over the plain with inconceivable fleetness, and gradually diminishing the circle, as, subsiding into their stately trot, they approximate the strangers, snorting wildly, devouring them with their brilliant distended eyes, manœuvring around them in graceful curves, until, after having satiated their curiosity, as if actuated by a simultaneous impulse, they rush off with the rapidity and noise of the whirlwind. There is no animal in animated nature to compare for beauty, symmetry, or spirit, with the horse; nor can I conceive any spectacle of moving life so magnificent, so imposing, as the grand, proud *abandon* of a band of those noble animals.

I will endeavour to compensate the reader for my meagreness of description by a few brief transcripts, which, for reasons before adverted to in these pages, may, perhaps, be regarded as over-warmly coloured, though in the main correct. Colonel Fremont, who has become a permanent settler in the valley, thus describes it: "The Valley of the San Joaquim is about 300 miles long and 60 broad, between the slopes of the coast mountains and the Sierra Nevada, with a general elevation of only a few hundred feet above the level of the sea; it presents a variety of soil, from dry and unproductive to well-watered and luxuriantly fertile. The eastern (which is the fertile) side of the valley is intersected with numerous streams, forming large and beautiful bottoms of fertile land, wooded principally with white oaks (*Quercus longgilanda*), in open groves of handsome trees, often five and six feet in diameter and sixty to eighty feet high; only the larger streams, which are from fifty to one hundred and fifty feet wide, and drain the upper parts of the mountains, pass entirely across the valley, forming the Tularè Lakes and San Joaquim River, which, in the rainy season, make a continuous stream from the head of the valley to the bay The foot-hills of the Sierra Nevada, which limit the valley, make a woodland country, diversified with undulating grounds and pretty valleys, and watered with numerous small streams, which reach only a few miles beyond the hills, the springs which supply them not being copious enough to carry them across the plains. These afford some advantageous spots for farms, making sometimes large bottoms of rich moist land. The rolling surface of the hills presents sunny exposures, sheltered from the winds, and having a highly favourable climate and suitable soil, are considered to be well adapted to the cultivation of the grape, and will probably become the principal vine-growing region of California. The uplands bordering the valleys of the large streams are usually wooded with evergreen oaks, and the intervening plains are timbered with groves or belts of evergreen and white oaks. Among the prairie, or open land, the surface of the valley consists of *low* level plains, along the Tularè Lakes and San Joaquim River, changing into undulating rolling ground nearer the foot-hills of the mountains."

Colonel Fremont's location in the valley is called the Mariposas, being situated on a small creek of that name, between the Sierra Nevada and the San Joaquim; it comprises ten sitios, or leagues square, purchased from a Spanish grantee, and said to contain quartz stratafications, both rich and extensive; so much so, that a sanguine public have placed the colonel in the ever-to-be-desired niche of the richest man in the world. I have seen many specimens of the amalgamations from the Mariposas, in which the golden particles are so very minute, they cannot be well detected with the naked eye; but the colonel affirms that, on stamping and retorting, it yields three ounces of pure metal to the pound of quartz—a percentage that would certainly justify the enviable position his friends have assigned him, but one that will not, in my mind, be realised by experiment. However, the matter will soon be tested, as he has let off some portions to companies, who are now engaged in erecting the necessary machinery.

As a general thing, there are much larger districts of quartz stratafications, appurtenant to the valley of San Joaquim, than that of Sacramento; and in some of those the gold is not only combined in minute granular amalgamations, but runs in rich, thick cords and bunches, averaging to the full as much metal as stone. Those regions have not as yet been fully explored or investigated, but sufficient is known to warrant a belief that they are vastly extensive, and will constitute the gold mines of California long after all the present surface-picking is exhausted.

Dr. Marsh, a gentleman of enterprise and intelligence, who settled in a fertile and romantic district near the base of Mount Diablo, before there was any idea entertained of the hidden wealth of the country, thus describes the valley of his adoption in a descriptive pamphlet: "It forms a fine *pastoral* region, with a good proportion of fine land, and a very inviting field for emigration. The whole of this region has been but imperfectly explored; enough, however, is known to make it certain that it is a fertile country. In the valleys of the rivers, which come down from the great Sierra Nevada, are vast bodies of pine, cedar, and red wood. The whole country east of the San Joaquim, and the waters of the Tularè Lakes, is considered by the best judges to be peculiarly adapted to the culture of the vine, which must *necessarily* become one of the *principal agricultural resources of California.*" This latter sentence is one to which I would respectfully call the attention of Colonel Fremont, and those other writers and talkers, who stick out for California's being essentially a corn-growing country, because it emanates from the pen of a gentleman of a high order of attainments, and a practical experimentalist, long living in the country, who, after trying a large variety of crops, affirms that vine-growing "must necessarily become one of the principal agricultural resources of California," the inference being evident that it is unsuitable for most other productions.

CHAPTER XIX.

Prefaratory Observations—California first Discovered—The first Colonisation Expedition—Establishment of the early Missions—Their total Number—An Outline of their System—Their Success in teaching Trades and Husbandry, and in securing the Friendship of the Indians—Fraternisation of the Spaniards and Indians—Leads to Intermarriages—The Period from which the Missions began to Decline—Date of their complete Subversion—Flagitious Conduct of the Government of the Day—These promising Establishments hasten to Decay—Extracts—Form of Government in Upper California in 1822—Presidios, Description of—Their Strength and Duties—The Missions—Dates of Foundation—Detailed Account of their Appearance and Construction—Indian Rancherias—Authority and Duties of the Reverend Fathers—Extent of the Missions—Number of Indians attached to them—Natural Habits of the Indians—The General Production of the Missions—They Establish a Commerce in the Exportation of Hides—Inland Towns, their Number and Social Distinctions—Amusements—Fecundity of the Whites in California—Ports and Commerce—Value of their Exports.

As the next branch of my rambles take a southerly direction through the Valleys of San José and San Juan, where the native Californian is still to be found following his peaceful pastoral avocations amidst the wreck of his early institutions, I think a few prefaratory remarks will not be out of place, together with a short extract from an observant and accomplished Spanish writer, showing the state and condition of the country in 1822, when Mexican independence was thoroughly established.

Alta California was discovered in 1548 by Cabrillo, an adventurous Spanish navigator, who effected a landing on the coast somewhere about where San Diego now stands, and first held intercourse with the wild aboriginal inhabitants of the country, planting the standard of Christianity on its remote and lonely shores; but it was not until the close of the last century, in 1769, that it was regularly colonised by Spaniards, the first properly organised expedition being got up in 1768, under the auspices of Father Junipera Serra, Prefect of the College of San Fernando, in Mexico, and commanded by Don Gaspar de Portala, which arrived in the following June, in two divisions, contiguous to the point of original discovery; and from that period may be dated its connexion with Spain and Mexico, who afterwards held it, in a state of intermittent subjection, until the late conquest by the United States.

At the above juncture commenced the systematic conversion and enlightenment of the natives, a Mission being immediately founded, about two leagues from San Diego, called San Diego de Alcala, and others, in quick succession, at other favourable points, under the protection of *presidios* (armed posts), until, as appears by a report from the Viceroy to the King, dated at Mexico, 27th December, 1793, there were thirteen in active, useful operation, which number was subsequently augmented to twenty-one. Inducements were held out to the natives to come in and settle closely around them, those that remained fractious and troublesome being chastised and kept under by the military. But the great majority, without much persuasion, came to reside in rancherias (villages) prepared for their reception, where they were initiated into the truths of revealed religion, trained to labour in the Mission lands, and educated and instructed in many of the most useful practical trades and sciences; amongst which that of agriculture was pursued with such skill and industry, that its products amazed the enterprising Vancouver and the scientific Humboldt. Grain sufficient for their wants was extracted from the soil with the aid of irrigation; vegetable husbandry, by the same means, yielded a superabundance; fruitful orchards, crowded with every variety of tropical fruit, teeming vineyards, reeling with profuse clusters of the finest-flavoured grapes, and large, thriving herds of imported breeds surrounding the establishments of those holy fathers, who, by their suavity and benevolence, so attached those children of nature to them, that they ruled and controlled them without the exercise of any irksome restraints, gradually extending the sphere of their influence until the whole length and breadth of the country came within their gentle sway, inducing the natives in the most remote fastnesses to forsake their savage haunts and habits, in order to participate in the benefits of the new order of things, who conformed so readily to Spanish customs, and became so socially amalgamated, that the new lay-settlers did not hesitate to strengthen the chain of connexion by frequent intermarriages, the more especially as, at the commencement, there was little, if any, of a female emigration from the old country.

The march of progressive civilisation and improvement received its first check on the declaration of Mexican independence, when, with the officious zeal peculiar to most revolutionary governments, they called in question the nature and extent of Mission grants, arrogating a power and temper of interference at once inconsistent with their original rights and immunities, and the continuous prosperity of those institutions. The reverend fathers bore up against those usurpations and injuries with truly Christian fortitude and forbearance, submitting with uncomplaining resignation to the most wanton acts of spoliation, which alienated from them the fairest portions of their reclaimed domains. Nor did they abate in the slightest their philanthropic labours until 1836, when one of the many internal revolutions and political changes of government occurred, bringing in its train a series of fresh changes and innovations, which sanctioned the destruction of the Mission establishments, by the arbitrary secularisation of their lands and tenements, and even the peremptory distribution of their cattle and stores, a corrupt and degenerate government pensioning its local minions and rapacious partisans by countenancing and enforcing this system of wholesale plunder and devastation, as unjust as it was impolitic; for the reverend fathers, seeing they could make no head against the nefarious current, for the most part retired from the country or abandoned their smiling establishments, which, from being model hives of industry and order, soon began to crumble and relapse into their immemorial state of barrenness, the Indian neophytes returning to primitive barbarism, and even the very temples of God participating in the universal and deplorable decay.

The following are the extracts alluded to in the early part of the chapter, which will be found to blend illustratively with the experiences of my short tour in the pastoral regions of California, and convey as full an historical summary of the country as may satisfy the general reader; for its earliest historical epoch may be strictly said to date from the founding of the first Mission, unless we go back amidst barbaric traditions and superstitions:

"Upper California, on account of its small population, not being able to become a State of the great Mexican Republic, takes the character of a territory, the government of which is under the charge of a commandant-general, who exercises the charge of a superior political chief, whose attributes depend entirely upon the President of the Republic and the General Congress; but to amplify the legislation of its centre, it has a deputation made up of seven vocals, the half of these individuals being removed every two years; the superior political chief presides at their sessions; the inhabitants of the territory are divided amongst the presidios, missions, and towns.

"The necessity of protecting the apostolic predication was the obligatory reason for forming the presidios, which were established according to circumstances; that of San Diego was the first—Santa Barbara, Monterey, and San Francisco afterwards; the form of all of them are nearly the same—and that is, a square containing about two hundred yards on each point, formed of a weak wall made of mud bricks; its height may be four yards in the interior of the square, and built on to some wall; in its entire circumference are a chapel, storehouses, and houses for the commandant, officers, and troops, having at the entrance of the presidio quarters for a *corps de garde*.

"These buildings in the presidios, at the first idea, appear to have been sufficient, the only object being for a defence against a surprise from the Gentiles, or wild Indians, in the immediate vicinity; but this cause having ceased, I believe they ought to be demolished, as they are daily threatening a complete ruin, and, from the very limited spaces of habitation, must be very incommodious to those who inhabit them. As to the exterior of the presidios, several private individuals have built some very decent houses, and having evinced great emulation in this branch of business, I have no doubt but in a short time we shall see very considerable towns in California.

"At the distance of one, or at most, two miles from the presidio, and near to the anchoring-ground, is a fort, which has a few pieces of artillery of small calibre; the situation of the most of them is very advantageous for the defence of the port, though the form of the walls, esplanades, and other imperfections which may be seen, make them very insignificant.

"The battalion of each presidio is made up of eighty or more horse-soldiers, called *cuera;* besides these, it has a number of auxiliary troops, and a detachment of artillery; the commandant of each presidio is the captain of its respective company, and besides the intervention—military and political—he has charge of all things relating to the marine department.

"The Missions, contained in the territory, are twenty-one; they were built at different epochs; that of San Diego, being the first, was built in 1769, its distance from the presidio of the same name is two leagues; the rest were built successively, according to circumstances and necessities; the last one was founded in the year 1822, under the name of San Francisco Dolores, and is the most northern of them all.

"The edifices in some of the Missions are more extensive than in others, but in form they are nearly all equal;

they are fabricated of mud-bricks, and the divisions are according to necessity. In all of them may be found commodious habitations for the ministers, storehouses to keep their goods in, proportional granaries, offices for soap-makers, weavers, blacksmiths, and large parterres, and horse and cattle pens, independent apartments for Indian youth of each sex, and all such offices as were necessary at the time of its institution; contiguous to, and communicating with the former, is a church, forming a part of the edifices of each Mission; they are all very proportionable, and ornamented with profusion.

"The Indians reside about 200 yards distant from the above-mentioned edifice; this place is called the 'Rancheria.' Most of the Missions are made up of very reduced quarters, built with mud-bricks, forming streets; while in others the Indians have been allowed to follow their primitive customs, their dwellings being a sort of hut in a conical shape, which, at the most, do not exceed four yards in diameter, and the top of the cone may be elevated three yards. They are built of rough sticks, covered with bulrushes or grass in such a manner as to completely protect the inhabitants from all the inclemencies of the weather. In my opinion, these rancherias are the most adequate to the natural uncleanliness of the Indians, as the families often renew them, burning the old ones, and immediately building others with the greatest facility. Opposite the rancherias, and near to the Missions, is to be found a small garrison, with proportionate rooms for a corporal and five soldiers, with their families. This small garrison is quite sufficient to prevent any attempt of the Indians from taking effect, there having been some examples made which causes the Indians to respect this small force. One of these piquets in a Mission has a double object besides keeping the Indians in subjection; they run post with a monthly correspondence, or with any extraordinaries that may be necessary for government.

"All the Missions in this California are under the charge of religious men, of the order of San Francisco; at the present time their number is twenty-seven, all of an advanced age. Each Mission has one of these fathers for its administrator, and he holds absolute authority. The tilling of the ground, the gathering of the harvest, the slaughtering of cattle, the weaving, and everything that concerns the Mission, is under the direction of the fathers, without any other person interfering in any way whatever; so that if one Mission has the good fortune to be superintended by an industrious and discreet padre, the Indians disfrute in abundance all the real necessaries of life; at the same time the nakedness and misery of any one Mission are a palpable proof of the inactivity of its director. The Missions extend their possession from one extremity of the territory to the other, and have made the limits of one Mission from those of another. Though they do not require all this land for agriculture and the maintenance of their stock, they have appropriated the whole, always strongly opposing any individual who may wish to settle himself or his family on any piece of land between them; but it is to be hoped that the new system of illustration, and the necessity of augmenting private property, that the people of reason will cause the government to take such adequate measures as will conciliate the interests of all. Amongst all the Missions, there are from 21,000 to 22,000 Catholic Indians; but each Mission has not an equal or proportionate share in its congregation; some have 3000 or 4000, while others have scarcely 400; and at this difference may be computed the riches of the Missions in proportion. Besides the number of Indians already spoken of, each Mission has a number of Gentiles, who live chiefly on the farms annexed to the Missions; the number of them is undetermined.

"The Indians are naturally filthy and careless, and their understanding is very limited in the small arts; they are not deficient in ideas of imitation, but they never will be inventors. Their true character is that of being revengeful and timid; consequently they are very much addicted to treachery. They have no knowledge of benefits received, and ingratitude is common amongst them. The education they receive in their infancy is not the proper one to develope their reason, and if it were, I do not believe them capable of any good impression. All these Indians, whether from the continual use of the sweat-house, or from their filthiness, or the little ventilation in their habitations, are weak and unvigorous. Spasms and rheumatics, to which they are so much subject, are the consequences of their customs; but what most injures them, and prevents propagation, is the venereal disease, which most of them have very strongly, clearly proving that their humours are analogous to receiving the impressions of that contagion. From this reason may be deduced the enormous differences between the births and deaths, which, without doubt, is one-tenth per year in favour of the latter; but the missionaries do all in their power to prevent this, with respect to the catechumens situated near them.

"The general productions of the Missions are the breed of the larger class of cattle, sheep, and horses; wheat, maize, or Indian corn; beans, peas, and other vegetables; though the productions of the Missions situated more to the southward, are more extensive, these producing the grape and olive in great abundance. Of all these articles of production, the most lucrative is the large cattle, their hides and tallow affording an active commerce with foreign vessels on this coast, this being the only means the inhabitants, missionaries, and private individuals have of supplying their actual necessities; for this reason they give this branch all the impulse they possibly can, and on it generally place all their attention.

"It is now six years since they began to gather in hides and tallow for commerce. Formerly they merely took care of as many, or as much, as they required for their own private use, and the rest was thrown away as useless; but at this time, the actual number of hides sold annually, on board of foreign vessels, amount to 30,000 or 40,000, and about the same amount of arrobas (twenty-five pounds) of tallow; and in pursuing their present method, there is no doubt but in three or four years the amount of the exportation of each of these articles will be doubled. Flax, linen, wine, olive-oil, grain, and other agricultural productions, would be more extensive, if there were stimulants to excite industry; but this not being the case, there is just grain enough sown and reaped for the consumption of the inhabitants in the territory.

"The towns contained in the district are three, the most populous being that of Angeles, which has about 1200 souls; that of St. Joseph's, of Guadaloupe, may contain 600; and the village of Branciforte, 200. They are all formed imperfectly, and without order, each person having built his own house on the spot he thought most convenient for himself. The first of these pueblos is governed by its corresponding body of magistrates, composed of an alcalde, or judge, four regidores, or municipal officers, a syndic, and secretary; the second, of an alcalde, two regidores, a syndic, and secretary; and the third, on account of the smallness of its population, is subject to the commandancia of Monterey.

"The inhabitants of the towns are white, and, to distinguish them from the Indians, are vulgarly called *people of reason*. The number of these contained in the territory may be nearly 5000. These families are divided amongst the pueblos and presidios; they are nearly all the descendants of a small number of individuals who came from the Mexican country—some as settlers, others in the service of the army—accompanied by their wives, and some few foreigners. In the limited space of little more than fifty years the present generation has been formed.

"The whites are in general a robust race, healthy and well made. Some of them are occupied in breeding and raising cattle, and cultivating small quantities of wheat and beans; but for want of sufficient land, for which they cannot obtain a rightful ownership, and the difficulties of irrigation, their labours are very limited; others dedicate themselves to the service of arms. All the presidial companies are composed of natives of the country, but the most of them are entirely indolent, it being very rare for any individual to strive to augment his fortune. Dancing, horse-riding, and gambling, occupy all their time. The arts are entirely unknown, and I am doubtful if there is any one individual who exercises any trade, very few who understand letters, and only the simple sciences are practised amongst them.

"The fecundity of the *people of reason* is extreme; it is very rare to find a married couple with less than five or six children, while there are hundreds who have from twelve to fifteen; very few of them die in their youth, and on reaching the age of puberty, are sure to see their grandchildren. The age of eighty and one hundred has always been common in this climate; most infirmities are unknown amongst them, and the freshness and robustness of the people show the beneficial influences of the climate; the women, in particular, have always the roses stamped on their cheeks. This beautiful species is, without doubt, the most active and laborious, exercising all their vigilance in the duties of the house, the cleanliness of their children, and attention to their husbands, dedicating all their leisure moments to some kind of occupation that may be useful towards their maintenance; their clothing is always clean and decent, nakedness being entirely unknown in either sex.

"There are four ports, principal bays in this territory, which take the names of the corresponding presidios. The best guarded is that of San Diego; that of San Francisco has many advantages; Santa Barbara is but middling in the best parts, at other times always bad. Besides the abovementioned places, vessels sometimes anchor at Santa Cruz, San Luis Obispo, El Refugio, San Pedro, and San Juan, that they may obtain the productions of the Missions nearest these last-mentioned places; but, from an order sent by the Minister of War, and circulated by the commandant-general, we are given to understand that no foreign vessel is permitted to anchor at any of these places, Monterey only excepted. The commandant-general has allowed the first three principal ports to remain open provisionally; were it not so, there would undoubtedly be an end to all commerce with California, as I will quickly show.

"The only motive that induces foreign vessels to visit this coast, is for the hides and tallow, which they barter for in the territory. It is well known that in any of these ports there is no possibility of realising any money, for here it does not circulate; the goods imported by the foreign vessels are intended to facilitate the purchase of the aforesaid articles, well knowing the Missions have no interest in money, but rather such goods as are necessary for the Indians; so that several persons who have brought goods to sell for nothing but money, have not been able to sell them. It will appear very extraordinary that money should not be appreciated in a country where its value is so well known; but the reason may be easily perceived by attending to the circumstances of the territory.

"The quantity of hides gathered annually is about 30,000 or 40,000, and the arrobas of tallow, with very little difference, will be about the same. Averaging the price of each article at two dollars, we shall see that the intrinsic value in annual circulation in California is 140,000 dollars; this sum divided between twenty-one

Missions, will give each one 6666 dols. Supposing the only production of the country converted into money, with what would the Indians be clothed, and by what means would they be able to cover a thousand other necessaries? Money is useful in amplifying speculations, but in California, as yet, there are no speculations, and its productions are barely sufficient for the absolute necessary consumption. The same comparison may be made with respect to private individuals, who are able to gather a few hides and a few arrobas of tallow, these being in small quantities."

CHAPTER XX.

Start for San José—Description of the Steamer—Uncomfortable *Fix*—The Passage—Appearance of the Passengers in the Morning—Aspect of the Country—The Embarcadero—A Yankee Version of the Navigation Laws—The Plains to the Pueblo—Outskirts of the Capital—The Capital itself—The Catholic Chapel—The Easter Festival—How it is celebrated—Easter Sunday Morning—The Spanish Carreta—Spanish Fashions, Customs, and Costumes—The Congregaton—Beauty of the Females—The Men look a Mixed Breed—Introduced to an Irish Gentleman—Meet some old Acquaintances—Number of Irish Settlers in the Valley—Their great and uniform Prosperity—Curious Enigma—English and Scotch Settlers.

I ORIGINALLY intended travelling by land to San José, as I expected the company of an agreeable friend, familiar with the route; but as he was detained by a sudden call of business, I chose the water, as the more preferable mode of reaching it, there being a small steamer on the station; not, indeed, very attractive in appearance or accommodation, for she was shaped more like a vat than a boat, propelled by a wheel aft the rudder, the machinery, boiler and all, standing right in the centre of the only apartment she contained, where the whole of the passengers were all huddled together, broiling with their own animal heat and that of the furnace, breathing an atmosphere of escaped steam and grease, and in constant bodily danger of being lugged in amongst the wheels, cranks, and pistons. Thirty dollars was the fare; and after filling her until there was no more standing room, we found she was so fast aground that we should be compelled to wait till next tide. As we could not land, the water being so shoal about us that no boats could approach, and no one seemed disposed for a bout at mud-larking, there was nothing therefore for it but patience, resignation, and the pastime of relieving legs for six hours, which was not very agreeable, as might be conjectured, from the fact that the vessel took a list, which made our footing somewhat precarious. The few seats on board were occupied by a few ladies, who constituted *tableaux vivans* of a series of individual satires on the lady who "sat on the monument."

Had we been enabled to start in the morning, we would have carried daylight with us to our destination; but as it was, the shades of evening enveloped us in their sombre veil before we got half-way down the bay; the lower part of which is so studded with shoals, we had to grope our way slowly, with the lead over each bow, until we got to the mouth of the river—a narrow, tortuous stream, where the current with the ebb was nearly a match for our horse power; so that the nine miles to the embarcadero occupied us nearly as many hours in accomplishing it. I never before endured so much fatigue, of so unusual a nature; standing twenty hours without room to sneeze, or draw a full inhalation; and as the morning's sun revealed the aspect of the group, I think I never within the same compass saw so many wobegone visages, grimy and greasy, to an extent that almost puzzled identification. I sincerely felt for the embarrassment of the ladies, who were evidently suffering in the throes of exposure, rightly conjecturing that the delicate tints of their velvet cheeks had contracted the hue of the filthy varnish, which was nowise improved by the nervous application of cambric. I have remarked ladies as they emerged from the gaseous glare of the ball-room into the clear critical light of day; but the complexional transfusion on board the steamer outruns all comparison.

The country on each side of the river (the Santa Clara) up to the embarcadero is low, and covered with tule, scarcely furnishing a patch of pasture the entire way; nevertheless, its dreariness was relieved by the scenery in the background, where the green verdure of wild oats and barley decked the mountains to their summits, and dark ravines, wooded with fine timber, intersected their sides, marking the course of the waters that hurry down them in the rainy season. At the point of debarcation the river, at low water, is barely wide enough for two ships to lie alongside each other; and, as usual, there is a town laid out there, with its lines of embryo streets and squares ostentatiously indicated. But speculation had not taken root in building, beyond some half-dozen houses; the principal trade of the place in storage-vending, boarding and lodging being vexatiously engrossed by an old British ship belonging to Belfast, which was towed up, dismantled; and though not exactly fitted up in the style of Trajan's Palace, on the Lake of Nemi, still so far excelled the establishments on shore in comfort and accommodation, that she left them without a customer—a piece of monopoly so provoking to Yankee cupidity, that they applied to the authorities for an injunction to restrain her proprietors from carrying on business on board her, on the score that it was an infraction of the Navigation Laws; and it would not surprise me one whit if the Executive ban were placed on this "sheer hulk," embedded in the mud, without either mast or rudder, as British subjects are sure to have a free interpretation of this restrictive code when it jars with the interest of native Americans. There will be no difficulty in making her out a "foreign bottom," and it can be easily construed into a "coasting trade," her doing a business by gangway with either bank of the river.

From the embarcardero to the pueblo (town) of San José is eight miles, commencing the fertile portion of the lovely valley of that name, which is chiefly settled by natives of the sea-girt isles. The plain is devoid of timber, except along the several arroyos (rivulets) that meander through it, whose courses are indicated by handsome belts of oak and sycamore, but along the base of the mountains by which it is bounded, deep groves of pine, oak, and red wood, of immense magnitude, are to be found. On each hand, as you travel towards the pueblo, may be seen handsome, comfortable ranchos in picturesque situations, and large herds of the finest cattle feeding over the finest pasture. More closely approaching the town, you meet some neat modern villas, with handsome enclosures and well-cultivated gardens; suburbs that would lead you to expect a place of corresponding taste and regularity; but in this I was completely disappointed, for it is a scattered, incongruous collection of poor houses, having for its nucleus, like most Spanish towns, a plaza or square, the other buildings and dwellings being erected at the caprice of the proprietors, without any idea or desire of order or regularity; and if I were to subtract all those of recent construction, evidently the work of the late settlers, it would be a place of utter insignificance. The majority of the old Spanish houses are of the rudest and simplest construction, the walls being composed of stout hurdles, which constitute the standards of a rough wicker-work, that is plastered coarsely over with adhesive clay, covered in with tule thatch, or hides, an apron of which answers for a window-shut, for in that class they do not aspire to the use of glass; a hide, also, is generally substituted for a door. There are some few houses that can boast a second story, built of adobe bricks, and roofed with tiles, supplied in the palmy days of the Missions, in which the better order reside; but although they are comfortable and commodious, they scarcely look respectable, bearing those marks of sloth and negligence which appertain to everything that falls within the province of the male population in that country; for the only thing the Mexican cares to take any trouble about are the trappings and accoutrements of his saddle-horse.

The Catholic chapel, occupying the centre of the plaza, is the principal feature of the city—if not for beauty at least for dimensions—and so slight is its affinity to the ecclesiastical order of architecture, that, were it not for the religious emblem of Christianity that stands conspicuously on the apex of its gable, a stranger would be more likely to set it down as a great unsightly barrack or barn. It is built of adobe bricks, with walls about four feet thick; it is one hundred and fifty long, and only twenty-four feet wide, about the proportionate width of a single aisle, with two transepts, like arms broken off at the elbows, which are, if possible, still more awkwardly disproportionate, while the vast space of dead-wall on each side is only relieved by four apertures, intended for windows, about four feet by two; so that it neither requires a woodcut, nor a laborious effort of imagination, to conjure up an idea of the clumsy figure it cuts in its conspicuous position. There is no attempt at internal decoration; it is roughly whitewashed, and the walls hung here and there with scriptural prints, executed in the coarsest style of art, daubed over in the most slovenly manner; the flooring being so badly joined, a walking-cane might drop down betwixt the slits, while even the altar and railings around it look more like temporary make-shifts than the deliberate efforts of a tradesman.

I happened to be in San José during Easter, which great Christian festival is celebrated there in a twofold manner, the rural inhabitants flocking in to take part in the religious ceremonies and enjoy themselves in dancing, horse-racing, and bull-fighting; but this latter pastime has been lately discontinued in Upper California, having receded within the limits of Sonora and Mexico. The pueblo, on Easter Sunday morning, was thronged with a gay and motley crowd. Carretas,* driven by Indian vaqueros

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* The carreta is the olden Spanish cart, and certainly the most ill-contrived vehicle it is possible to imagine; it is constructed by a long heavy piece of timber, reaching in the centre from the end all the way out to the oxen's heads, answering the purpose of a pole, and is roughly morticed into a strong, clumsy, transverse beam, placed exactly in the centre of the body, which constitutes the axle; side and end beams being rudely affixed to sustain the frame, all of a scantling so heavy that they make a load of themselves without any freight. The wheels are about two feet in diameter, made by cross cutting two slices, eight inches thick, off the butt of a log; the hole in which the axle works being one foot in circumference, and not made to fit with any approach to exactitude, a huge oaken linch-pin, with a big nob-head, keeping them in their place. The carreta is made to balance, and is drawn by means of a cross-bar at the end of the pole, which is attached by strong raw hide-thongs to the horns of the oxen.

(herds), momentarily arriving with family groups, who immediately retired, either to the house of an acquaintance or to the rear of some garden, to change their travelling attire for splendid dresses of the richest Chinese silks, which fitted their fine forms with the greatest accuracy; members of the wealthier class dashed in at intervals in light curricles, whisked along by spirited horses; young caballeros galloping at full speed, and those blessed with señoras adopting a more sober pace, the fair dame sitting in front, reclining in the bend of her partner's arm, with which he holds a parasol, while with the other he manages the horse. The mongrel costume, which has lately been gaining favour amongst them, was, on this occasion, altogether discarded, and the pure unmixed Spanish fashions adopted by the natives; caballeros using their steeple-crowned sombreros, bright-coloured ponchos and serapes, velvet calzoneras, thickly studded with small silver buttons, loose white cambric calzoncillas, and buff boots of undressed leather, to which were attached the enormous spurs peculiar to the country, with rowels as large as a cockade trailing along the ground, and dangling on each side of them two little pendant drops of steel, that produced a perpetual tinkle, tinkle.

It was quite easy to distinguish between the foreign and native ladies, independently of feature and complexion, as the Spanish dames cover their heads with fine crape or silken scarfs of considerable length, which fall gracefully on their shoulders, the ends coming to the front, and gathered loosely in the hand, while the others wore the stiff bonnet, which looked prim and prudish in comparison. In the dresses there did not appear to be any predominant or prevailing fashion, so far as colour was concerned, for they were of every hue and shade—from the light and lively pink, sky-blue and green, to the more sombre maroon and deep dark black. There were no veils used, nor were the scarfs drawn so invidiously close as to conceal the lovely countenances which realised all my preconceived notions of Spanish beauty; some radiant with an excess of loveliness, retaining the pure Castilian contour and complexion, shrouded in redundant tresses of darkest sheen, and lit up with dark lustrous soul-searching eyes, too dazzling to be encountered longer than a glance. The figures of all were of the most faultless symmetry, bearing the impress of nature's moulding, and harmonising most enchantingly with an unschooled dignity of mien and freedom of carriage, the birthright of the Spanish lady, which, associated with a *naïve*, easy graciousness, and warmth of manner, renders her the most fascinating creature of her sex.

Few of the men can boast of being

> True hidalgos, free from every stain
> Of Moor or *Indian* blood,

for they are dark almost to ebony, with a tendency to that style of compressed physiognomy and distended nostrils that form an attribute of the Indian, with whom, in the early settlement, they intermarried and cohabited; but why that sex alone should have lost their physical characteristics, while the women so remarkably retain them, is a question whose solution lies too deep in natural economy for my comprehension.

Long before service commenced, the congregation assembled in front and around the chapel, where there were refreshment-booths erected, resorted to by those who felt the appetising influence of a morning's drive. There was a good deal of promenading amongst the gayer portion, and conversation amongst the more grave; some *outre* Yankee fops crushing amongst the groups, to stare and ogle the charming señorittas, who seemed to regard them with a haughty disdain. However, the arrival of the padre put an end to the scene, all following him closely into the chapel; the gentlemen taking one side, the ladies the other, where they spread out rugs, that were used in lieu of seats, the more respectable portion having very rich ones carried by pages.

After mass I delivered some letters of introduction to Mr. White, a gentleman from the west of Ireland, who came through from Canada in 1846, and has acquired a large fortune and the esteem of all classes. He was alcalde two years in succession, and could continue in the office, which is both influential and lucrative, but from the new tone of politics, and the envious spirit concomitant with American settlement, he has declined the re-election. He owns large tracts of property in the neighbourhood, and has built a fine mansion a mile out of town, surrounded with a highly-cultivated garden, where, with his amiable lady and interesting family, he seems seated in a little terrestrial paradise.

I was made acquainted by Mr. White with several families from the south and west of Ireland, amongst whom I was agreeably surprised to find two, Messrs. Murray and Hart, who came from my own neighbourhood, and knew all about my family and connexions. They kindly invited me to take up my abode at their ranchos, volunteering to furnish me with horses *ad libitum* to pursue my rambles. I also became acquainted with Mr. Murphy, who, with Mr. Martin, from the county Wexford, have accumulated great wealth there, and become leviathan landed proprietors. Mr. Murphy's sons have five independent establishments and extensive ranchos in the most favoured portions; and there are many other Irish settlers scattered through it, all of whom, without an exception, are not merely comfortable, but extremely affluent; yet at home they were, according to their own acknowledgment, miserable strugglers on the confines of destitution, and some of them the victims of the barbarous system of exterminating eviction, driven from their hovels and patches of land as if they were vermin that marred fertility, loathsome objects that pained the delicate eye of the landlord, relentlessly persecuted on the pretext that their ignorance and sloth was innate, unconquerable, and their dispositions prone to savage cruelty, devoid of any ambition to improve their circumstances, and shameless recipients of parochial relief.

Well, those exiles of Erin, once settled in a country exempt from the infatuation and pettifogging tyranny of autocratic landlords and hostile magistrates, soon became inspired with natural aspirations of independence, which quickly dispelled the torpor of indifferentism, stimulating industry with the assurance of its just requital into continuous and prosperous exertions. Where the late inmate of a workhouse, seeing before him his reward, sets zealously to work to earn it, bringing to bear a cheerful energy, all the more active from its long course of unnatural repression, and an intelligence sufficiently quick and comprehensive to direct it into profitable pursuits—this new era in his life giving a contradiction to the calumny on his self-respect; for the man who at home, under the constraint of circumstances, sought the aid of the relieving-officer, was there transformed into the generous dispenser of hospitality, and being interested in the peace and progress of society, became a voluntary promoter of law and order, instead of a wild and reckless disciple of rebellion.

How is it that those results cannot be brought about in the land of his nativity? Surely change of climate has not any influence in developing those desirable attributes. There is no natural element peculiar to Ireland adverse to their growth and propagation. No; we must seek in the human laws of the country, and the vicious social relations, especially those of landlord and tenant, for the germ of those evils which make a useless and discontented citizen of the bold peasant, and in banishing him from the home of his heart, convert him into a foreign enemy.

There are also many English and Scotch settlers in the valley, some dating their settlement so far back as twenty-five years, all of them wealthy and large landowners, Mr. Forbes, in addition to his other possessions, being proprietor of the quicksilver mines, the richest in the world. In fact, what between the old Spanish residents, and the claims purchased by and granted to natives of Great Britain, there is very little room for any fresh emigrants —a state of things that has set the Yankees grumbling above their breath, grudging the fairest section of their newly-acquired country to "strangers and interlopers," while some of them, taking advantage of the suspensory situation of the country, and the questionable nature of title, audaciously squatted themselves on the most improved portions of the old settlers' property, trusting to time, chance, and the assistance of their brother Yankees—should need be—to confirm them in their possessions. However, a summary eviction by one of the Mr. Murphys, assisted by a *posse comitatus* of his friends, nipped the squatting movement in the bud, and sent those lawless vagabonds to the rightabout.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Mansion House Hotel—Civic Propensities of San José Squirrels—Senor Don Antonio Sunol—His Garden—Vineyard and House-made Wines—Meet other noble Spaniards there—Horse-racing in California—Electioneering and Sporting on Easter Monday—The Course—Spanish Amenity *v.* American Rudeness—The Race—The Victors and the Vanquished—A Yankee Drinking Match—Monte Dealing—A Californian Ball—The Senate and the Assembly—Legislative Furniture and *Fixins*—"Wait for a Pause"—Mode of Discussion—Dinner Hour—Clerks and Messengers.

During my stay in the pueblo I took up my abode at the Mansion House, a new hotel, built on the speculation of its being the stopping-place of the members of the senate and assembly, and those officials whom the affairs of government necessarily draw to the capital; it is immeasurably the best hotel in California, fully equal to those in the States, and was quite full during my sojourn, as both houses were in session; but after their adjournment its business must be very limited, as is the general trade of the town, which may be readily conceived when noticing the fact that ground squirrels (an animal nearly as timid as our rabbit) burrow in the plaza, and gambol about without any fear or apprehension.

I had the honour of introduction to Señor Don Antonio Suñol, a Spaniard of the highest family, whose household establishment is becomingly regulated; his garden, though not adjusted in the trim English style, contains a great variety and abundance of choice fruits, amongst which I observed a profusion of figs, peaches, and vines, clustered with their luscious burdens. He took pride in showing me through it, and afterwards politely invited me to partake of lunch, when he produced a red wine of domestic manufacture, which, though rather heavy and fruity for my taste, possessed a very agreeable flavour; and I have no doubt, when the process comes to be more thoroughly understood, a very good beverage will be produced, as the Californian grape, when carefully cultivated, is of a superior quality, not of great size, but exceeding in taste and richness; there was also another liquor of Californian distillation on the table, of which I tasted, called "aguardiente;" it is an extract of the grape, very palatable and potent, and improves very much, I understand, by age.

I met here again General Vallejo and Señor Don Emanuel Pico, a relative of the general's, and a thoroughbred hidalgo; very wealthy and exceedingly popular, from being passionately addicted to the sports and amusements in favour with his countrymen. In the course of the preceding fall, at Sonoma, he matched a horse of his against an American nag, belonging to a Mr. Hudspeth, to run three hundred varas (a measure somewhat short of a yard), for 5000 dollars, and was beaten by a head, as he supposed, in consequence of a slip at the finish; which led to a new match, for 10,000 dollars, over an increased distance of five hundred varas, to come off on Easter Monday at the pueblo of San José.

As the time was now at hand, the interest became intense, and the betting both brisk and large; the Americans, to a man, backing their horse, and the Spaniards, on the other hand, being just as unanimous in upholding that of Señor Pico, all bets, according to the custom of the country, being staked when made. Easter Monday was, therefore, a great gala day at the pueblo; and, in addition to its being a holiday, and having the attraction of the race, it was the day appointed for holding the election of all the officials of high and low degree under the new Californian constitution; so that we had beaux and belles tricked out in all their finery, sporting characters clamorously wagering, and politicians zealously canvassing for their various friends,—making up a medley of excitement, bustle, and interest, that never before had a parallel in this simple city.

It was arranged the race should take precedence, the start to be punctual at ten o'clock; shortly previous to which the whole population and visitors in procession with the horses moved off to the course, quite close to the town, amidst a hum of betting and conversation. Neither of the nags showed much breeding, but exhibited a striking contrast in condition; Mr. Hudspeth's looking like a pampered sire, while the other appeared as if after a severe attack of influenza. The jockeys were much of a size—mere children—clad with only a thin pair of drawers, bootless and spurless, carrying only a whip made like a top-scourge. The course was perfectly straight, over two beaten tracks, about two feet wide, and four feet apart, running parallel; it was not staked or roped, but the spectators arranged themselves in two lines,—the foot people forming the inner rank, the horsemen the second, those in vehicles constituting the rear.

While the ground was being measured, hundreds of speculators, carrying about their dollars and dubloons in shawls and handkerchiefs, kept up a stormy vociferation, in which it was apparent the American horse had the call; and after all the money was staked, horses, mules, and accoutrements were betted one against the other, until four-fifths of those on the ground were implicated in the issue." During the excitement the lines were somewhat broken, and the principals, with some special friends, rode along to have them readjusted, affording an opportunity of contrasting the demeanour of the Spaniard and the Yankee; the one all courtesy and urbanity, politely motioning the people back; the other, in a tone of vulgar insolence, using the most frightful imprecations, and plunging their horses amongst them whenever they came to a Spanish group. I never remember to have been more deeply impressed with ineffable disgust than while witnessing this exhibition of arrogant brutality. Talk of Americans "going ahead;" but in order to be unincumbered in the strife, they cast aside every figment of olden civilisation, not even retaining the fig-leaf of decency or decorum,—at least, so far as the Californian emigrants are concerned.

As soon as the lines were again formed, the jockeys were put up, bare backed, the horses being only girthed with a narrow surcingle, inside which they thrust their knees at an acute angle. As they were led to the post, a nervous, breathless silence ensued, hearts beat quick, and the strained sight began to ache—they are turned; you might hear a pin fall; another throbbing moment—they are off—yes, they get off at the first attempt, going at scores from the jump, the thongs at work from the start.

The pace was rather good, but the race was not in doubt for an instant, as Senor Pico's horse, evidently labouring under a shoulder strain, never extended himself, so that even in so short a distance he was beaten fifty yards.

The Yankee uproar was terrific, and the inherent bad taste and underbreeding evinced at the triumph, was the more repugnant from the placid and good-humoured temper in which the Spaniards bore their defeat. "I knowed we would whip them damned tawneys," and such like expressions, met your ears at every turn, and as they led off the Spanish horses past their late master's, who were returning on foot to the town, they let slip no opportunity of venting their obscene and ribald buffoonery.

I was induced, by an indescribable feeling of attraction, as if to fill up the measure of my loathing at their day's conduct, to look on at a Yankee drinking-match, perfectly in character and keeping with the tenor of their other goings on. It took place at one of the open booths on the course, attracting a great crowd, and giving rise to fresh bettings. The man who won the toss for choice of fluids selected port wine, each tumbler having a raw egg broken into it—a potion that appeared to take his opponent by surprise; however, they went to work, and with the short necessary pauses, got up as high as the ninth glass each, when one betrayed symptoms of distress, and, to make use of Lord Norbury's pun, could not "be egged on" any further, for, in attempting to raise the tenth to his mouth, the stomach rebelled, after a fashion, that communicated a spasm of nausea to me, which it required all the muscular power in my throat to subdue.

I afterwards heard the victor vauntingly proceeded to the baker's dozen, and wound up by drinking the spectators' health in a bumper of brandy-and-water. There were other private racing matches, but the great bulk of the crowd returned to the town, where all the fondays (tarems) and gaming-houses were filled to excess. It was observable in the Spanish houses that ladies set down to monte, betting, and smoking their tiny cigarettes with a most *nonchalant* air.

There was boisterous political excitement, ministered too freely with strong drinks; but the Spaniards, although possessing votes, did not take any interest or concern in the proceedings. In order to see their method of conducting these establishments, I went to dine at one of the fondays, the apartment in which was a dingy one, and the implements not of the most burnished order, but the table-cloths were as white as virgin snow, and of fine fabric. The fare was altogether confined to frigoles tortillas (half omelet, half pancake) and hashed beef, stewed in lard, and so highly seasoned with chile colorado, as to cause me to suck in cool air to sooth the palate. They are wonderfully addicted to the use of pepper, and still more so in the Mexican country, where I have it on authority, that bandits who have been hung and left to swing in chains, as a terror to evil doers, are never touched by birds of prey, their flesh is so impregnated with this pimiénto.

There was a public ball in the evening, in a large room over one of the principal tiendas, which was well attended by the Spaniards, but the gaieties were disturbed in the early part of the evening by the unauthorised intrusion of some tipsy Americans; order, however, was quickly restored by their summary ejection, when everything went on smoothly and delightfully. I looked on in an ecstasy of admiration, as the lovely señorettas whirled past me in the giddy waltz, and gracefully glided through the mazes of the cotillon, skimming through the figures with a lithe dignity and easy elegance of style, that constituted the very "poetry of motion;" added to which, the irresistible magic of their manners, free from the slightest leaven of coquetry, not only led captive the outer senses, but suggested tenderer thoughts. I felt this the more sensibly as the fair Francisco graciously assisted my limping Spanish, in its efforts to utter the feelings of the moment, archly smiling as they took the form of compliment to herself.

Next day I visited the houses of the Senate and Assembly, both of which august bodies are accommodated under the same roof, one down stairs the other above; but, by a sort of solecism in the arrangement, the Senate, or Upper House, occupy the lower apartment, which is a large, ill-lit, badly ventilated room, with a low ceiling, and a rough railing a little inside the door, beyond which none but the elect may pass. Each member had a rush-bottomed arm-chair, and a small desk with stationery, that was not in much requisition. At the further end, the Speaker was perched in a species of pulpit; the floor was covered with a number of little carpets, of various shapes and patterns, looking as if every member contributed a patch to make up the robe, which had quite a mosaic appearance, the idea of antiquity being assisted by the threadbare state of the whole. A slip of paper was stuck with wafers on the door as you entered, labelled "wait for a pause," reminding me of the familiar inscriptions on those of the billiard-rooms at home, "wait for the stroke," which, from the tumult inside, would be the more opposite of the two, from the great probability of its ending in blows. The other apartment is precisely the same size, but has the advantage of greater loftiness, and exhibits at once the difference of grade betwixt the two bodies in the style of the furniture—plain common chairs, flat deal tables, and a strip of matting thrown where the feet are erroneously supposed to rest, being the extent of accommodation, a paltry difference, at best, and as it appeared to me, at variance with the republican doctrine of equality, and the "genius of free institutions." A similar notice was stuck on this door; but were I to wait at the threshold of either house for a pause, I should wait for the daily adjournment, for the noise and jabbering was as incessant as the twittering of a flock of swallows chatting over their intended migration.

Nothing can be more remote from the regularity, decency, or decorum of deliberative assemblies, than the proceedings of these bodies; there was no order of debate or system of discussion, but a turbulent dinning colloquy, made up of motions, interruptions, assertions, and contradictions; several members generally on their legs at the same time, and those with legs on the tables, adding to the tumult by the music of their heels. I never could catch the faintest idea of the subject under consideration, nor is it possible that the merits of any measure can be sifted under such a species of discussion. They meet about ten o'clock, A.M., and are let loose for dinner at one o'clock, when they come out with a rush, like so many overgrown schoolboys. It is unnecessary to add, that smoking, chewing, and whittling, do not constitute an infraction of the rules of either house, privileges that are accorded also to a squad of slip-shod clerks or messengers who loll about the stores, making a *tout ensemble* really unique, and entirely characteristic.

CHAPTER XXII.

Remove into Country Quarters—Enchanting Appearances of the Valley—Delightful Climate—Agriculture in the Valley—The Breed of Cattle—Comparative Qualities of Native and Foreign Beef—Instinct of Birds of Prey—Bringing Cattle over the Plains a bad Speculation—Californian Horses—Their Powers of endurance—Often cruelly Taxed—System of Travelling—Their quick Sagacity in avoiding Squirrel Holes—Danger of Riding a Strange Horse over the Plains—Probable Cause of their Stunted Stature—Lassoing and Ox-throwing—Nice Palates of the Cattle—Domestic Fowls and Animals—Few Varieties of Game—Visit the Quicksilver Mines—Take a turn through the Ranches—No Butter, no Cheese in the Spanish Houses, owing to the Indolence of the Males—Other Evidences of their unconquerable Sloth—Fastidiousness of the Women in Washing—The Process—The Duties of the Men—Hospitality of the Spaniards—No expense in Travelling through the Valley—A charming Senoretta—The Incident of the handsome Trunk—Mode of Californian Courtship—Invited to a Wedding—Continue my Rambles—The Mustard-weed Nuisance.

I SHIFTED my quarters from the pueblo to the residence of Mr. Kell, a gentleman of English descent, settled in a lovely quarter of the valley; and as the distance was not very great, and being a good pedestrian, I sent on my luggage by waggon, and set out on foot, in company with a shillelah, proceeding leisurely, sitting in the shade at various points, to gloat over the gorgeous views that unfolded themselves in my progress. My path lay for a good distance along the Rio Santa Clara, which waters the pueblo, and then receives the little tributes of the several arroyos that meander murmuringly through those fertile plains, all melted with glorious timber, contributing enough of woodland scenery to adorn the enchanting landscape, and so pleasingly distributed, that officious art could scarce devise an improving charm; animated nature, too, contributed its quota to the effect on the numerous herds of fine cattle dotting the rich pasturage, resting in groups beneath the wide spreading trees, or standing in the cool purling currents, together with herds of horses, backed in for shelter under the umbrageous foliage, with here and there a snug rancho, disclosed by a slanting ray of sunshine, finished this transcendent picture, which, reposing in its grand natural frame of bold and handsome mountains, exhibited in reality a scene as rich and lovely as ever arose in the warm imagination of Berghem, or was portrayed by the delightful pencil of Claude Lorraine, under the influence of his happiest inspirations; and when added to its unapproachable pastoral charms, are its voluptuous and salubrious climate, for which it has been long justly celebrated, we have a location for settlement scarcely equalled, not to be surpassed, and extending over a space of nearly ninety miles long, and fully averaging five miles in width.

Mr. Kell has tried field and garden cultivation, the former on a very limited scale, but the latter with complete success, raising potatoes, onions, melons, pumpkins, and cabbages of the finest description; and Mr. Walker, a friend of his, told me, that at his ranch, near the Mission of Santa Clara, he, last season, secured two excellent crops of potatoes, putting in his second one early in August. I did not see any grain, but it has been raised in particular localities susceptible of irrigation, which is indispensable in most seasons, confirming me in my opinion of the general unfitness of California for extensive agricultural operations; great varieties of rich clover and indigenous grasses coat the plains in dense fleeces, exhibiting a succulent luxuriance, corroborative of my previous observations regarding portions of the Sacramento Valley, and proving that the moisture and genial temperature of the earth, essential to vegetation, is preserved by being sheltered from the exhaling rays of a scorching sun, by the thick close growth of herbage that is consequent on pasturage.

The breed of cattle are not to be excelled for milk or beef; and there is a peculiarity about them as contradistinguished from those that come across the plains, or those in our own country, that is strikingly remarkable; for their flesh can be used immediately after slaughter, eating as tenderly as if kept in the best ventilated meat-cellar, under the superintendence of the most watchful epicure for the prescribed time. This I had a good opportunity of testing, as Mr. Murphy, a brother-in-law of Mr. Kell's, came up to the corral the evening after my arrival, with a *caballada* (a band of horses) and a large drove of cattle for the Stockton market, and, as he was accompanied by a number of Indian vacqueros, he killed a beef to supply them with rations. I did not much approve of the method in which this operation was carried into effect, as, in my mind, the mode in vogue amongst the miners, that of shooting them, is much the speediest and most tidy plan. The animal, in this instance, was first lassoed, then tripped up with ropes, and while kicking and struggling violently, was bestrode by one of the men, who plunged a long knife into his throat, taking fully two minutes to accomplish a deed that might have been achieved in as many seconds.

I dined on a steak cut off this beast before the process of skinning was completed, and never, either in Dolly's or José's, have I eaten a more tender morsel. The extraordinary instinct of the carrion crow and turkey-buzzard on those occasions is somewhat wonderful; for, although you rarely if ever see them in your rambles, the lasso is not well around the victim, ere you observe numbers of those gloomy birds of prey moodily perched on the neighbouring trees, waiting for their repast on the entrails, without your being aware of their stealthy approach.

The speculation of bringing cattle across the plains, in anticipation of a scarcity from an increased consumption, has proved rather disastrous, as I learned from Mr. Murphy —a competent authority on the subject—that one tithe of the number is not now slaughtered for food, that used to be formerly, when a trade was carried on in hides and tallow.

The horses are under-sized and light limbed, but otherwise well-proportioned, and capable of enduring fatigue, and fasting to a marvellous degree; qualities that I frequently saw cruelly taxed by their owners, who set no value on the noble animal, riding one always on the full loup till he is used up, then turning him loose, and mounting a fresh one. A late tourist in California, thus describes the manner of equestrian travelling there: "To account for fast travelling in California on horseback, it is necessary to explain the mode by which it is accomplished. A gentleman who starts upon a journey of one hundred miles, and wishes to perform the trip in a day, will take with him ten fresh horses and a vacquero; the eight loose horses are placed under the charge of the vacquero, and are driven in front at the rate of ten or twelve miles an hour, according to the speed that is required for the journey. At the end of twenty miles, the horses which have been rode are discharged, and turned into the caballada, and horses which have not been rode, but driven along without weight, are saddled, mounted, and rode at the same speed, and so on to the end of the journey. If a horse gives out from inability to proceed at this rate, he is left on the wayside, the owner's brand is upon him, and if of any value, can be recovered without difficulty. But in California, no one thinks of stopping on the road on account of the loss of a horse, or his inability to travel at the rate of ten or twelve miles an hour; horseflesh is cheap, and the animal must go on as long as he can, and when he cannot travel longer, he is left and another substituted."

The watchful caution and sagacity of the Californian horse in avoiding the squirrel-holes, with which the plains abound, is rather surprising, as one would imagine it would be impossible to discern them when going at top speed; yet a horse bred and reared in the country, rarely ever makes a *faux paux*. Nor does the native rider ever bestow a thought on them as he races along, riata in hand, in pursuit of a wily mule or a wild steer, though, for my part I would rather ride a steeple-chase over the stiffest sections of our Connaught country, than cross those plains at a three-foot canter. The American horse cannot even walk safely amidst those burrows, as was lamentably proved during my stay in the valley, in the death of Captain Fisher, resulting from a severe fall from a horse purchased from an incoming emigrant.

I conceive the stunted stature of the Californian horse is ascribable to breeding in and in; for rancheros pay no attention whatever to the changing of the blood, or obtaining fresh stallions, leaving the old stud-horses amongst their mares until they become impotent, and then selecting a young sire from the herd of the self-same stock. It is curious enough, that notwithstanding the consanguinity of the Mexican and Californian, and their versimilitude of tastes and customs, the latter never thinks of breeding mules, which animal is such a general favourite with their southern neighbours. All those to be found in Alta California were either brought over the plains, by the American emigrants, or by the Sonorians or Mexicans coming up to the mines.

I have already noticed the expertness and precision of the Spaniards in throwing the riata, and their skill as horsemen; but in the valley of San José I saw both acquirements carried to still higher perfection, and a new mode of dealing with an obstinate ox, who, after breaking the riata, was still followed up by the rider, and, when making a short turn, as the pursuer reached his quarters, got a sudden jerk by the grasped tail in the opposite direction, which brought him to the ground with a concussion that stunned him beyond further resistance. I have been also assured, on respectable authority, that it is not an unusual feat to catch a wild-goose on the lasso, which I can readily believe, from having seen the proximity into which they will permit you to approach; so that a noose, thrown dexterously amongst the flock, is likely to catch either a neck, leg, or pinion.

The water in the arroyos is clear and limpid in the extreme, free, too, from any peculiarity of taste to the human palate. Not so, however, with the brute creation, who may be seen daily coming of their own accord, in vast elongated strings, single file, crossing several of those streams, until they reach the particular one they relish, and, after slaking their thirst, returning to their own beat in the same order, never stopping to brouse or commingle with the other herds through which they pass.

Pigs of an improved breed are plentiful in the valley, and propagated largely by the settlers from the old country; but the Spaniards eschew them alive, and decline the use of porcine diet, not from any qualms of conscience, but from scruples of stomach, arising from the unclean habits of the animals—an arrogance of palatial taste that, I believe, is not indulged in by the proudest nobles of Old Spain, and one that is supremely ridiculous in a people who are culpably lax in many of their tastes and customs. Sheep are not bred or fed in the valley, from the quantity of coyotes that abound there, but are brought up, through it, to the Francisco market, from the Monterey district. They are of a gaunt and miserable description, light in carcase, making dry and flavourless mutton; but as fine poultry as are to be met with in any country may be seen around every rancho. The only game of any description is the grizly bear and black-tailed deer, the varieties of the feathered tribe being confined to those I have already enumerated as resorting to the Valley of the Sacramento.

I made an excursion to the quicksilver-mines of Mr. Forbes, accomplishing a distance of thirteen miles under forty minutes. They are situated on a hip of the western range of mountains by which the valley is bounded, and abound in ore of the very richest description. They are easily wrought, but have never been worked on a systematic or profitable scale. Now, however, from the enormous demand for the article as a subsidiary agent in the neighbouring gold mines, the proprietor, in conjunction with a company of scientific capitalists, are making very extensive preparations for working them. There are said to be other quicksilver, and rich silver mines in the valley, but their whereabouts is kept a profound secret, pending the settlement of the disputed title question.

I made my billet for the night at the rancho of M. Nairzes, a gentleman of good Spanish family, that came to settle at the original colonisation of the country, obtaining a grant of the largest magnitude. The residence is of adobe bricks, and must, at its first erection, have been a goodly-looking country residence, but, from want of repair, its exterior has contracted an appearance of decay that, however, does not extend to the interior, which is still commodious and comfortable. I was most hospitably received, and regaled on the usual fare of stewed beef, served up somewhat in the shape of currie, with tutillas and coffee. There was plenty of rich milk, but no butter; and, to my surprise, I found that neither it or cheese are generally made by the natives, who, on particular occasions, purchase it from the other settlers. This unprecedented and disgraceful state of things arises from the incorrigible lethargy and indolence of the men, who rest satisfied with the single article of milk, declining to enlarge their domestic comforts at the slight trouble it would cost them of catching and taming to the habit of hand-milking a few more of the fine animals by which they are surrounded.

Thus, the women are exempt from any blame in the matter; and, from two instances that came within my observation, where Irish settlers took Spanish wives, I am convinced, if they were afforded the opportunity, they would not only supply their household demand, but extend their dairy operations to meet the vast and profitable demand which has latterly sprung up in California for fresh butter.

But the inborn sloth of the male Spaniard is so deeply rooted, it appears hopeless to think of extirpating it, either by stimulus or example, of which no further proof need be sought than their continuing to use the old abominable carreta, while they see their new neighbours bringing loads on their commodious waggons, with a single yoke of oxen, that it would require three yoke even to move in their ponderous, ill-contrived vehicles. They have not a spark of ambition in their nature, save that which is akin to the lust of savage pageantry, in adorning their persons with gaudy attire, and arraying their steeds with glittering caparisons. The limited duties which are indispensably forced upon them of keeping their herd together, occasionally driving some to market, killing one for consumption, and cutting firewood, are only discharged under the compulsion of circumstances; for I really believe, if they could eke out existence on the suction of their thumbs, they would never be roused into action, unless it were by the excitement of a bull-fight or the attractions of the gaming-table. It is not, therefore, to be deplored that such a country as California is passing away from the occupation of such a race, nor do I conceive it uncharitable to desire that the finer region of Sonora may soon come into the possession of some more energetic nation, that will make its mineral and other resources subservient to the increasing wants of mankind. The females, as I before observed, are worthy of a far better order of helpmates, for all that comes within their province is tended with a care, taste, and assiduity that is in strange contrast with what I have already noticed. Even in their washing they are so scrupulously particular; they think nothing of going from eight to twelve miles to find water of good detergent properties. In this they may be truly said to excel, obtaining a purity of colour, and putting it out of hands with an artistic finish that leaves nothing to be desired. The first part of the process is gone through with the soap-root, which abounds in the valley; the next with an excellent home-made soap, resembling that we call Castilian; that both cleanses to perfection, and imparts a bouquet to the linen which is palpable and agreeable.

There is one virtue that must not be denied the Spaniard of California, and that is, hospitality, which they exercise with a hearty graciousness that wins upon your partiality, notwithstanding all their other shortcomings; it also prevails amongst the foreign settlers, in its most genuine guise; so that, unlike the valleys of the Sacramento and the San Joaquim, where the worldly mania has superseded that domestic virtue, a man may travel where he lists without incurring any expense whatsoever, even were he inclined to be extravagant. I never spent a night in any ranch in that district without finding other strangers who were attended with a degree of kindly solicitude, that could not be purchased at a house of entertainment.

In recording the hospitality of M. Navizes, I cannot neglect noticing, nor shall I readily forget, the queenly manner in which his lovely daughter done the honours of the establishment, though a young girl, scarce seventeen, and rarely moving beyond the sphere of her paternal hearth. She was not only free from any embarrassing shyness, but deported herself with a modest self-possession and *naïvete* of manner, that would arrest admiration in the most refined society. In the course of the evening I observed a handsome, highly-ornamented trunk at one end of the apartment, and in noticing its decorative finish, I thought I detected a transient blush suffusing the delicate cheek of the maiden, and a slight hesitation of expression, that made me apprehensive I had broached an unpleasant subject, until, on looking round, I was reassured by the happy chuckle of Señor N., who playfully pressed the fair girl to gratify my curiosity regarding it; but she evaded the paternal request, and hurried into an adjoining room, casting back a soft, mild frown, that appeared on very intimate terms with good humour.

The history of maleta (trunk) was then narrated to me by the old man. In California, it is the custom, when a young gentleman conceives an attachment for a fair lady, instead of avowing his passion in stammering sentences, to send a handsome maleta to his sweetheart, containing various articles of female apparel of the finest and most fashionable description; if she accepts and retains the present, it is considered tantamount to a recognition of the swain's pretension; but if returned, he must bow to his hard fate: a primitive sort of proceeding, that tends to supersede all the painful hemming, hawing, and that-is-to-saying inseparable from a *vive-voce* popping of the question; while, at the same time, in adverse circumstances, it relieves the señoritta from the harsh necessity of pronouncing the cruel decree, and withstanding the pitiable sighs of the lovelorn aspirant while receiving his future doom. Señoritta N., her father told me, had, with his consent, decided on retaining her maleta, and an early day was fixed for the marriage, at which I was pressed to be a guest during the usual festivities, but my other arrangements compelled me to forego the pleasure.

I continued my delightful rambles through the valley for several days, exploring its most secluded retreats, penetrating to its most retired beauties, and visiting most of the native and foreign ranches, those of my countrymen amongst the number, where the true Milesian "cead mille faltagh" awaited me, which I enjoyed with the greater satisfaction and delight, as I felt assured that the easy, affluent circumstances of my friends warranted them in indulging their natural disposition to a most liberal extent, without, in the slightest way, trenching upon their resources; and, in some of the happy evenings I spent amongst them, it afforded me a tearful pleasure—appreciating another fine trait of national character—as I witnessed the strong feelings of sympathy and sorrow they evinced, in adverting to the miseries of their suffering brethren at home, "starving and dying," as they said, "on the green fields of poor Erin, while they had enough and to spare in a foreign land."

Amongst all the settlements I did not see any amount of cultivation worth noticing, not that there are not many districts where corn could be successfully raised, but the unaccustomed trouble of irrigation, the scarcity and dearness of labour, coupled with the moderate price of imported flour, caused agriculture to be neglected. There is one national nuisance the valley is subject to, which it is found next thing to impossible to abate—I mean the wild mustard, which invades the richest pasturage, covering large tracts of the choicest land, to the annihilation of all other vegetation; for it is of such rank growth, it attains a height of nine and ten feet, and its small imponderous seed is carried about by the slightest current of air. From experiments, it has been ascertained that it could be destroyed by repeated cuttings down during the season; but as the germs are found to be carried about, and deposited with the ordure of the cattle, all attempts, unless unanimously adopted throughout, must prove useless, where, in absence of all fences, the cattle of the indifferent man may wander over the grounds of his more painstaking neighbour. When sprouting in the early spring, the young sprouts of the mustard make a most tender and delicious greens, superior to our early York or spinach; and in the fall, the tall stems, that are quite as large as the sugar cane, rot and wither into the earth, barely leaving a trace of their existence.

During all my wanderings in the valley, I saw only one snake, and that of very diminutive dimensions, not thicker than a large worm. The rattlesnake was said to exist there, but none have been seen for years.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Vexations of Authorship—Indian Imitativeness—Start for San Francisco—Find the Steamer withdrawn—A Bull F-r-ight—Fatal Termination—Arrive at Mr. Martin's Rancho—The Accident of his Settlement—Senora Martin and Family—The House and Furniture—Arrangements for Travelling—Attend Divine Service at the Mission of Santa Clara—Appearance of the Mission—Devotional *Alameda*—Buttresses or Pillars of the Church—Carved and Painted Parables—State of Affairs at the Mission—Abortive Attempts of the Jesuits to found Schools in the Valley—Predicament of the Settlers on Church Property—Scene of Leavetaking—Presents, Emotions, and Reflections—Scenery along the Bay—The Rancho of Don Antonio Sanchez—The Mission of St. Francis Dolores—Francisco Cockneys—The remainder of the Road—My Farewell and Peroration.

On my return to Mr. Kell's, I found some letters awaiting me, that called me back to Francisco—rather a provoking thing, as I laid out my accounts to visit Monterey, San Diego, and the coast countries in that direction. I also found other food for vexation, in the scrawled and blotted state of a large note-book, which I left in my room, containing memoranda of my rambles, which, as I transcribed and amplified, I scratched over, that I might the more readily refer to the remainder; but an Indian muchaca (young girl), who acted in the capacities of chamber and kitchen-maid, got hold of the book, and amused herself in manufacturing hieroglyphics, in imitation of mine, rendering several pages completely illegible, which entailed considerable bother on me, and afforded me the satisfaction of getting laughed at, as I took the unsophisticated creature to task for the mischief.

I set out next day on my return, packing my kit on a second horse, and taking a vacquero with me to bring back the animals; but on reaching the embarcadero, I had the mortification to find that the little steamer had been withdrawn from the station, and as at that season the winds prevail from the north and north-west, causing sailing craft to make tedious passages, I determined on sending my luggage by water, and going overland myself; but to accomplish this, it was necessary either to buy or hire a horse, as I could not take Mr. Kell's nag any further. I ascertained on inquiry I might suit myself at a Mr. Martin's, whose ranch was a few miles off, in the direction my route lay. As I was proceeding towards it, walking leisurely, in a meditative mood, through a herd of cattle, a jealous bull broke in upon my reverie, and made me retreat precipitately into some trees, that very fortunately were close at hand, amongst which I evaded him, and by means of a riven limb, got into a fork about eight feet from the ground. He came right under me, bellowing and tearing up the earth, and pertinaciously remained, though I waited over half an hour, hoping to tire him out; but as no reprieve appeared likely to arrive, and seeing my only means of escape was by shooting him, I drew my pistol from my belt, and stretched my arm down, he at the same time raising his head up until the muzzle almost came in contact with it, thus enabling me to make a certain and speedy job of it, for he fell with the report, and scarcely even quivered.

Mr. Martin is a gentleman well advanced in years, and nearly transmuted into a Spaniard, from his long residence in the country, not even speaking his own language with perfect fluency. He is a native of Scotland, and was cast away on the coast some twenty-five years ago, leading for some time an erratic and strangely chequered life, until he became the inmate of a Spanish family, amongst which he found his present wife, with whom he received as a portion his present rancho—one of great extent and fertility.

Señora M. reminded me of Dr. Parr's pedantic designation of the late Lady Blessington, being really a "gorgeous" personage—tall, finely moulded, of that voluptuous style of beauty that comes within George the Fourth's category of "fat, *brown*, and forty." Her three daughters are about the most faultlessly beautiful girls I ever saw; and in that country, where personal charms are so warmly appreciated, and marriages take place at so early an age, I expected to have discovered several maletas in the house.

I did not meet so well furnished and regulated a household in all my peregrinations as Señor M.'s; every article being of a good and handsome description, all in their proper places, and scrupulously neat. The house—a spacious one—containing several rooms, all distinct from each other, entered from a long piazza extending along the entire front of the building. I here revelled in the luxury of a regularly furnished bed and chamber, expanding myself betwixt sheets of snowy whiteness, and nestling my head on a tastefully fringed pillow, secure from the shafts of the sleepless musquito, within gauze curtains, arranged in the stead of other drapery, with a Yankee clock to mislead me into a long morning's nap.

I could not induce Señor M. to sell me a horse or mule under any consideration; but I had the option of choosing any one from amongst his entire stock, selling it when I reached my destination, and sending him the proceeds by a trading captain he named—a kindness for which I suppose I was indebted to my being a brother Briton. But notwithstanding the urgency of my business, he would not hear of my leaving next day, which, being Sunday, I accompanied Señora M. and her interesting family to prayers, at the Mission Church of Santa Clara. Our drive was a sweet one of nearly four miles, principally over Señor M.'s lands, partly in the direction of the pueblo of San José.

The Mission is built in unison with the prevailing designs of those ecclesiastical establishments—the rectories and church—of adobe, and in a better state of repair and preservation than most of the other Missions, owing, I conceive, to its contiguity to the pueblo, as several of the inhabitants make it a practice of frequenting it on church-going days, in preference to hearing mass at home; for they can combine recreation with piety in strolling along the noble alameda (shady avenue) which extends the greater part of the way, in whose delicious shade devout reflections, and inspirations of sanctity, are wont to be invoked by pious pilgrims as they saunter along to the shrine of their religious duties, who, on the day in question, as indeed on all occasions of the sort, were principally composed of the softer sex, the others contenting themselves with a bare profession of faith, being rather *buttresses* than *pillars* of the church, as some wag remarked of a great stickler for his creed, who never entered the precincts of such an edifice, or subjected himself to any of its self-denying ordinations.

The interior of the church is spacious, but plain even to coarseness, hung round with prints and figures, parables in painting and carving, in which the design is so obscure that, like the signboard where the identity of the animal was doubtful, they require a key to arrive at elucidation. There is only one padré now attached to the Mission, whose labours are altogether confined to his clerical duties; for there, as well as in all the others, the schools of trade and education have been abandoned, and the Indians permitted to relapse into their primitive barbarity.

A body of French Jesuits lately visited the valley, with a view to promote secular education; but the jealousy of the Spanish clergy was so inveterate, they would not be allowed any footing, much to the chagrin and disappointment of the numerous settlers, one of whose most perplexing difficulties is the education of their children.

The lands around Santa Clara are about the finest in the valley, and are principally in the possession of old country settlers, who bought their interests from the different incumbents—purchases, I have my fears, will be disturbed, from the tenor of Carey Jones's report respecting church property, already quoted, and from the fact that the present occupiers, for the most part, are emigrants from the "Sea-girth Isle." There are the remains of extensive orchards, gardens, and vineyards adjoining the church and residence of the padré, but the walls have crumbled down, and the unpruned trees have run into a tangled mass of wild shoots, looped together with the tendrils of various parasites, bearing only an abortive fruit, that conveys a very faint resemblance of the delicious varieties that cumbered their branches in the palmy days of Mission management.

Next morning, through the kindness of my excellent host, I was saved the trouble of selecting a horse; for after breakfast I saw a spicy nag, fully caparisoned, paraded in front of the house by a vacquero, which Señor M. informed me was intended for my use, at the same time giving me a superb pair of Mexican spurs as a souvenir; after which I went to say my adios to the ladies, who were in a group under the verandah, constituting a family picture, the very personification of domestic felicity and personal loveliness. I felt an affecting tingle pervade my nerves as I went through the ceremony of leave-taking, which was augmented in no small degree as Señoritta Julia, gently pushed forward by her mamma, presented me with a pretty silken purse, the joint production of the fair sisterhood—a compliment so gracious, so wholly unexpected, and tendered by a young and lovely girl, with such an artless but enchanting sincerity of manner, impressed me with emotions of the most tender gratitude, which, I fear, I failed to convey with becoming feeling in the few thankful expressions of acknowledgment I managed to utter. I cantered off amidst the kindly adios of this charming family; and as I rapidly skirted round the extremity of the beautiful bay, I resigned my horse to his own impulses, carried away in a current of ruminations on the subject of maletas, and that pantomimic mode of eliciting reciprocity of sentiment on the most important and eventful condition of society, while I also indulged in interjectionary conjectures as to whether or not Señoritta Julia ever had one sent her.

The scenery along the bay-shore is of a quiet but pleasing character; the mountain-sides and skirts serrated with deep ravines, densely timbered, and opening into numerous vistas, across which the deer bounded, startled by the unusual echoes of my progress. At times I emerged into wide tracts of open country, subsiding into hanging slopes from the ridge of mountains that run parallel between the bay and the ocean, covered to their summits with a luxurious growth of wild oats and barley.

Being alone, and wishing to reach Francisco before dark, I pushed along at a pace that would keep me in a good place with a pack of harriers; and after four hours, arrived at the ranch of Don Antonio Sanchez, a distance of over forty miles, just as the family dinner was being served up, to which I was hospitably invited, and felt just in the vein for the meal after my appetising canter. I got there a sample of aguadiente of a most excellent quality, that made as agreeable a potion as poteen or cognac, a proof that, with proper care, a capital spirit may be produced. I rested two hours, and procured a good feed of barley for my horse, who resumed his journey with as much pluck and spirit as he commenced it.

I got to the Mission of St. Francis Dolores sufficiently early in the evening to give time for a stroll round its precincts. The olden bounds of the Mission are about the same extent of Santa Clara, and like it, too, they are in a somewhat better state of repair and preservation than the general run of those establishments; but there is quite a town springing up about it, subject to the prevailing epidemic of lot speculation. It is a favourite place of resort on Sundays for the Francisco cockneys, who may be seen pic-nicking on the hill sides, paddling about the bay-shores, and scrambling over the heights, with fully the industry and enterprising inquisitiveness of their Bow-bell brethren on their rural expeditions. The lands are of the finest description, and fully cropped with pre-emption squatters, elbowing each other in territorial anticipations.

The road thence to Francisco is over and around sand-hills, partially covered with a scrubby evergreen oak, wild gooseberry-bushes, and other shrubs and brambles, that have not as yet been baptised in the botanical font; but it is surveyed most of the way, and laid out in streets and squares, which, as I before remarked, bewilder the traveller, who, in vainly looking for the outlines of the city, calls to mind dreadful legends of quicksands and earthquakes of immemorial voracity. I, however, succeeded in reaching the real city before dark, and next day, by the aid of a little judicious puffing, found a customer for the game little horse, at a price that must have pleased, if not astonished, my good friend Mr. Martin.

And now, gentle reader, it comes to our turn to part, after having travelled some thousands of miles good-humouredly together, for rambles, like every other sublunary undertaking, must have an end at some point or period; but in saying farewell, permit me to express a hope that we may meet again, travelling "in search of the picturesque" or marvellous; for I do not intend sitting down the remainder of my days, kicking my heels against the chair rung. Like most ramblers, I have contracted quite a fancy for change of scene, and if I can only muster change enough to gratify the propensity, you will very probably hear of me on some dissolute island, dressed like Brian O'Lynn, "who had no coat to put on," waiting for some stray ship to restore me to my sorrowing friends.

Perhaps, too, in recounting my erratic movements, I may be enabled to weave a moral into the narrative, which I vainly endeavoured to in the present case, though, mayhap, one may lie ensconced in a corner without my ever dreaming of it—a circumstance, I am told, not of unfrequent occurrence in the literature of the day, the majority of authors being such a marvellously proper order of men, that their most fugitive pieces, their most random records, may become unconsciously imbued with the delectable tone of their minds, and a fine ethic lesson silently break the shell, becoming full-fledged before the author of its being even bestows a thought on the hatching of it.

Betwixt ourselves and the wall, however, I will candidly admit, that neither the journey nor my book were undertaken under any philanthropic impulse; the truth is, that having no potatoes to dig at home, I set out with a view of keeping my hand in practice, by digging in the bountiful fields of California. But though there was no rot in the crop there, nor greedy landlords to watch me, I found the produce was most jealously guarded by agues, and fevers, and scurvies, and rheumatisms, ever ready to pounce upon the avaricious intruder; and I saw some, who dared to brave the terror of those sleepless guardians, worried to death in their relentless fangs, and others, scarcely more fortunate, crawling away from the encounter, maimed and shaken to the inmost sources of vitality. Permit me to ask you, can "life be sweet" whose every pulsation inflicts a sting, that throbs to the agony of some gnawing malady, that is dragged out in sighs and moans, and the torturings of regret and remorse, tantalised by luxuries it durst not taste, though within reach of the gold, whose acquisition entailed those irremediable miseries?

Wretched victim of cupidity, your riches are vile trash, your repinings are unavailing, your sufferings are ineradicable. Gold cannot avert your premature fate—induce one ray of consolation—nor propitiate the serene smiles or blessings of health which you bartered with the demon of avarice. Life is only sweet when conscience sits calmly on its throne, when its sources are unpolluted with disease, even though it be spent on the bare necessaries required for its sustentation. It is seldom the sweeter for gold. No; gold more frequently embitters its relations; yet to become possessed of it, we toil, and work, and go to law, and fight—nations as well as individuals—and when possessed, is it not squandered in health-destroying pursuits and sinful occupations, producing enervating excitement for the minute, while the hour is eked out in morbid cravings and maddening reflections. On the other hand, placid, unalloyed happiness fixes its abode in the more humble dwelling, where gold is a stranger, where the wages of healthful exertion are appetite and sweet repose, and where true pleasure and enjoyment are spontaneous visitors to gladden the pauses of vocation. I imagine I hear your reply, "That's all mighty fine, and though true in the main, few would accept happiness on the terms, if they had the option of gilding their career"—an observation in which I cannot help coinciding. Nay, I will go further, and candidly admit, even after elaborating those opinions with considerable effort, that one of the strongest stimulants in my scribbling, was the desire of gaining gold.

THE END.

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